

REALITY AND BEING

THE MEANING OF SOME COMMON WORDS,
AND THE NATURE OF REALITY

BURNT ELIOT



REALITY AND BEING explores some common words beginning with reality and being, and ending with absolute and relative. But this is not about words, it is about what the words indicate. It is about truth, illusion, awareness, and self-awakening.

REALITY IS WHAT TRULY IS — Reality is not subject to birth and death, nor to existing or not-existing, and reality does not depend upon anything else. Your being and your awareness are what reality is. Being is the unshakable sense of your own reality; being is how reality knows itself. Awareness is how being experiences the world.

HERE IS A JOURNEY from ordinary beliefs that seem not quite true, to a single obvious truth that is unimaginable. The ideas along the way are adapted from well-established sources and traditions from around the world, some quite modern, some as old as many thousands of years.

*How does a teacher teach other beings
that each of them is exactly the same being
as the teacher who is teaching them?*

- Chapter 6.

A GUIDED WORKBOOK in 22 topics and 18 illustrative stories. At every turn you must ask yourself, “What does this mean to me, personally?” These words cannot answer the question for you, but there are many puzzles, suggestions, examples, and explanations to guide and encourage you.

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The illustration depicts reality exploring what is possible by imagining life as a little man looking around at his world; he sees the sun above but thinks of the moon instead.



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REALITY AND BEING

Intuition beyond questions
Seeing beyond words
Knowing beyond thoughts
Being beyond limits

1 – WORDS (AN INTRODUCTION)

For thousands of years, philosophers and artists from around the world have warned us that we live in a world of illusion, a world where nothing is what it appears to be. This is not some idle fantasy; many remarkable people have stood up to tell us this in no uncertain terms. They say we have come to believe many things that are not true. They say this is the cause of great misery and suffering among us.

If these voices are right, then our task should be to discover and know what is real. But if all that we know and experience is illusion, where do we look to find reality? The first step is to understand the problem: is this world all or mostly illusion? Are we deluded even about the most ordinary things? Well, do our most cherished beliefs really seem true, or do we have doubts? I'm not asking if they seem false, only whether we know beyond any doubt that our core beliefs agree with reality. Isn't that a hallmark of true beliefs? Think carefully:

What do you know about reality? Is it something you take for granted?

What do you know about life? Is life real or is it fantasy?

What is this place, this world, this universe? How did it get here?

In order to understand whether this world is illusory or real, we must be able to distinguish between reality and illusion. We must in some way be able to recognize reality when we encounter it and be absolutely certain that it truly is reality. So, one of the very first tasks is to be as clear as possible about what the words, “reality” and “being,” are referring to.

Modern dictionaries suggest that “reality” means actual things or facts and “being” loosely means existing. These are surprisingly weak definitions for such important words. We can do better than that.

We can easily distinguish reality from objects, ideas, facts, experiences, and such. Reality is not subject to coming and going, nor to existing or not existing, nor to birth and death. But objects, ideas, and the like are all subject to these limits. Reality is what truly is—it’s as simple as that. This allows us to talk about reality as a place, like a theater, where everything else comes and goes. It is where things happen, where something might be either true or false, or where a thing might never exist at all. It is where time and space appear.

We can easily distinguish being from existing. Being is the inner knowledge of our own reality, while existing and non-existing refer to all the things that we experience, feel, think, and imagine. This allows us to talk about our own being as the subjective knowledge of things like sensations, perceptions, emotions, ideas, and self-awareness.

With these meanings, reality and being seem closely related, as though they are just different facets of a single thing. Being knows reality, and being knows awareness. Through awareness, being and reality experience both real and unreal things. Are being and awareness just different aspects of reality?

What does this mean? Can being and awareness be the same thing as reality?

In all, there are six distinctions that form the core of this book:

Reality and Unreality

Being and Existence

Awareness and Experience

Container and Content

True and False

Absolute and Relative

The discussion of any particular topic, idea, or word will invariably refer in some way to these core distinctions.

How to Read This Book

First, a caution about words. The meanings of these words can never be precisely the same for you as they were for me when I wrote them, because meaning exists within us and not within the words. Meaning is essentially private. The word, “tree,” always means something different to different people. To think otherwise is just wishful thinking. This is a much richer concept of meaning than we find in common dictionaries. For convenience, we naturally limit our expectations about words and shared meanings, and we do well with that, but we still get caught in a lot of misunderstandings.

Because of the way this book is structured, the meanings of some words will seem to change from topic to topic; sometimes this change will be slight, but sometimes it will be significant. This is partly by design, but on the other hand meanings always change and evolve with use. Try to notice this as you read.

Sometimes I suggest an idea early on but I don't explain it until later. That is another reason that meanings will appear to change. It is the nature of writing that it is linear—one word at a time, one idea at a time—even though the ideas themselves are not linear. If an idea seems too difficult to follow, just take note of it and read on. Revisit it later when something reminds you of it.

Look for ideas that inspire you. It is reality that you want, not just words and ideas. Try to be flexible. Expect nothing from this book except ideas and suggestions (and of course, encouragement). I can give you words and ideas, but I cannot give you your own knowledge of reality. No one can. You must experience for yourself what the words suggest. Practice “what if.” Ask yourself, “Does the world really look and feel like this?” Take time to reflect on each of the suggestions and questions.

The actual subject of this book is more than just words. It is a state of mind, an image of what reality is, or just self-awareness, depending upon how you read it. It is difficult to explain, but it is easy to know and understand by experiencing it yourself. But you must be willing to examine all of your assumptions. And it will take some time.

On the surface, we will explore some very common words, but the simple ideas behind these words present some of the most elusive topics imaginable. I don't mean that these ideas are difficult to understand; when you begin to recognize what the words are referring to, you will easily understand the underlying ideas. You might not agree with some ideas, but you will understand the subject. Do not get tangled up in words. Look for ideas, and then look at the world around and inside you.

The ideas are simple and straight forward. In fact, it is because they are so simple that they become difficult

to talk about. It is like a particular color that we see or a musical sound that we hear: such things are impossible to describe in words. Words present obstacles as much as they offer guidance. Don't over-think things. Try to experience the meaning of the ideas. This is about your being, your experience, and your intuition as to what in this world is real and what is not real. This is about being fully aware of something you surely must already know.

Beneath the words and ideas, this book was written to address a single subject. Each individual topic or chapter approaches that subject from a different direction. Some of the ideas may seem unusual, but most of this material was gathered and adapted from a wide variety of well-regarded sources and traditions from around the world, some as recent as this century, some as old as thousands of years ago.

Treat this as a workbook; to get the most out of it, you must work at it.

I cannot do this for you; you must do it for yourself. Depend upon your own experience and your own intuition as you explore the ideas and puzzles that are laid out along the way. The more effort you put into this, the more satisfied you will be with the results. Explore the hints and questions you encounter—turn away from the book now and then to ask yourself if it makes sense.

There are about 40 key words or ideas for you to consider. These are arranged into 22 interrelated topics. Within these topics there are 18 stories that illustrate the ideas. The relationship between story and topic is not always obvious; as you read a story, you should ask yourself how is this story related to the stories and topics that came before it. Exploring this relationship will help you to understand how each of these is a different aspect of one single underlying subject.

The title and table of contents hint at this subject, but exactly what is it? The first story, below, is intended to help you understand this. Think about it, but don't be discouraged if you cannot solve it right away. It is a difficult puzzle. Just keep it in mind while you are reading.

Where Is Here

The subject of this book has been around in many forms for a very long time. I find it impossible to adequately name or describe it. Every attempt I have made seemed too misleading, too restrictive, or too vague.

Instead, let me introduce it by way of this puzzle.

*Here begins a journey from where beliefs
seem not quite true, to where truth may
seem unbelievable.*

Answer this question: Where is here?

*For every answer you consider, answer
this question: If that is where here is,
then where is that?*

*If you think you can answer this with a
few well-chosen words, then perhaps
you can.*

*You be the judge. Only you can decide
whether or not you have solved it.*

How is this puzzle related to the topic, *Words*?

How is the question, "Where is here?" similar to the question, "What color is the sky?"

2 - REALITY AND UNREALITY

REALITY: “Reality” refers to what is. What is and reality are exactly the same thing. Reality is not subject to birth and death, nor to beginning and ending, nor to existing or not existing. Whatever is real is what truly is, in and of itself, without depending upon anything else. (This is surely the oldest and simplest definition of reality.)

UNREALITY: “Unreality” refers to what is not real in and of itself. Unreality is also referred to as illusion, apparition, error, or even ephemera. Individual things are by their nature unreal because they are subject to creation and destruction, they exist at one moment and not at the next, their characteristics change, our perception of them changes, their existence depends upon the existence of other things, and so forth. Individual things are not what they seem to be, except that when examined closely they seem not quite real. (This definition is at least 2500 years old.)

Our awareness of unreal things is real because awareness is real and unreality appears within awareness. Reality contains unreality, while unreality does not contain any reality of its own. Unreality participates

in reality in the sense that awareness experiences the play of unreality in all its infinite forms. It is like watching a magician conjure up a magical illusion: the illusion itself has no reality of its own except as an illusion. If you look carefully, then you can easily see this is true.

Because unreality appears within reality, we are aware (we know) that reality supports and illuminates unreality; this is intuition. Through intuition, awareness knows itself as the certainty of all experience and all intuition.

Reality is exactly what it seems to be.

Reality alone has this character.

Individual things do not have this character. If it seems a thing might not be real, then it cannot be real.

Reality and unreality complete each other. Reality is the illumination; unreality is the illuminated. Neither can be fully known without the other.

Knowledge of reality and knowledge of unreality arise together within being. It is like seeing an entertainer twirl a firebrand, causing the appearance of a circle of fire: the circle of fire is not real. The awareness of the circle of fire is real because awareness is reality; but the thing that seems to appear is not what it appears to be.

It is like a tree, a living thing that we can see, touch, hear in the wind, and explore. The reality is in the awareness and not in the things within awareness. The shape and form of the tree have no reality of their own; shapes and forms are only ideas thinly projected onto other experiences just as the idea of a circle of fire is projected onto the experience of the firebrand. Neither can reality be found in the elements of which the tree is made; these, too, are only ideas. Where, then, is the tree?

*The things of this world are not real,
yet awareness of these things is real.*

You are real. You are perfectly, unchangingly real at the deepest level of your being and your awareness. Your experience of this world is in real awareness. The world that you experience in your awareness is unreal, apart from the fact that your awareness of this world is perfectly real. Your world is a real experience of unreal things made mostly of name, form (or characteristics), and habit.

We become entranced by our experiences, and we ignore the significance of our reality; but because reality underlies unreality, we do know and understand reality at the deepest level of our being whether we recognize it or not.

*Direct your attention to the deepest level
of your being. What do you find there?*

Ancient Chinese Puzzle

Chuang Tzu once wrote about a man who dreamed he was a butterfly. It was a long dream and he was very happy to be a butterfly. Then he awoke from his dream and he was puzzled: is he a man who dreamed he was a butterfly, or is he a butterfly who is now dreaming he is a man?

Someone else once wrote about a man who fell asleep and dreamed that he was wide awake. In this dream he fell asleep, and once again he found himself dreaming that he was wide awake. Then he awoke, but he could not figure out whether he was awake or was still asleep and dreaming that he was awake.

There was another man who slept normally. One day he was wide awake, but suddenly he was awakened and he realized he had been sleeping all along and only dreaming he was awake. But now he wonders if he is still asleep in some even longer dream and if he will very

soon awaken again to be even more awake than he is now.

Then there was a man who was wide awake, living an ordinary life. "Here around me is my whole world," he said to himself. One day he falls asleep and dreams he is floating in empty space where he has no body and there is nothing around him at all to cling to. Within that dream he falls asleep again and dreams about the world he used to live in. He thinks to himself, "Here inside me is my whole world." When he was asked about that dream within a dream, he said he can't remember waking up; and even if he did suddenly wake up again right now, he would not know whether this world is all inside him or all around him.

Recently there was an old man who was known to be living in a small village near a big lake. When someone asked him where does he live, he said, "I don't seem to live anywhere at all." Then, when asked where is his home, he said, "It is inside me, of course." Oh? "Yes. If it were outside of me, how would I ever know what it really was?" When asked if home were perhaps both inside him as ideas and outside him as the world, he said, "If it were both inside and outside, how would I ever know which is which?" When asked if he was sure about that, the man said, "No, of course I am not sure about it; it's just a lot clearer this way." When asked if he knew what ideas were, he said, "Yes. I think I do; ideas are what the world is made of."

How is this story related to reality and unreality?

We normally do not have great difficulty knowing whether we were awake or asleep; so, what does dreaming represent in this story?

Among these five dreamers, which would agree with the statement, "At least something seems real"? What could that something be?

3 - BEING AND EXISTENCE

BEING: “Being” refers to direct self-knowledge of reality. Being is what (or who) experiences, perceives, or knows things; it is both the reality of knowing and the way that reality knows. Being is not divided in its nature, while the things we experience and perceive seem divided from one another in all manner of ways. Being has the character referred to as undivided or nondual. Being is not subject to birth and death, nor to beginning or ending, nor to existing or not existing, while all the things that being experiences and perceives are subject to these limits. In this way, “being” is simply another way to refer to or discuss reality.

*The only way to discover, learn, or
remember this is by intuition of exactly
what reality and being are.*

Look within yourself to find being.

EXISTENCE: “Existence” refers to the unreal things that being perceives. Among these existing things, some appear to be living beings who themselves seem to perceive other things, such as rocks, illusions, other beings, sensations, emotions, ideas, and so forth. People commonly

say, "I exist," thereby identifying themselves with one existing thing among many. Existence has the character referred to as divided or dual because it has the appearance of many separately existing individual things.

It is the nature of undivided being that being and existence are not separate from one another; and it is the nature of existence that being and existence appear to be separate things. Being contains and illuminates existence.

The word, "being," alone does not mean the same thing as in the phrase, "a being." In conversation, you might identify yourself with (or as) an individual being when answering the question, "What are you?" or you might do so as you consider your image in a photograph or in a mirror. But this not the same as the direct knowledge of yourself as pure undivided being.

Beware of thinking of yourself first and foremost as only one individual among others; instead, turn your attention to the true nature of being. Being is not at all subject to the arising and subsiding that dominates the world of existing things. Sometimes it is said this way:

*Existence and non-existence do not
apply to being.*

Identify with being. Explore its meaning. In reality, you are not an individual being. But you seem to perceive the existence of an individual being, and you wrongly identify yourself with that presumed existence. Your perception of existence is defined by the limits, vagaries, confusions, sensations, ideas, and habits that characterize existence and experience. But existence and everything that appears within it is illusion.

The world of existence is compelling and entrancing, and it is easy to fall into error and bad habit.

*Notice being as though it is separate
from existence, and notice what unfolds
from that practice.*

*Notice being as though it encompasses
all possible existence, and notice what
unfolds from that practice.*

Observe the world of things as it truly is: the illusion of separate, individually existing things. It arises clearly and distinctly within being—even the unclarity and indistinctness of things has its own clarity and distinctness. Just be, with the image of separate existences all around and through you.

Do you think you have no such knowledge of being? Think again. Knowledge of being is direct self-knowledge. You can ignore it, but you cannot escape it.

*Knowledge of the words in this text is
indirect knowledge. You will not find
self-knowledge in these words; you will
only find it within you.*

Being Dreams Forgetting

There was this being who lived nowhere at all. This being did not live anywhere because he had not yet imagined anywhere to live. Nine hundred and fifty years ago, Anselm wrote about a being so great that there could be no other that was greater. Anselm's being was like this being.

For the longest time, this being did nothing but dream. He dreamed many things. At first his dreams felt chaotic, but the dreams gradually became more orderly and more enticing. He was pleased with this, but after a time he got bored just dreaming dream after dream.

Then he tried something different. He dreamed that he forgets he is this being. The dreaming became very intense, often a nightmare that seemed it would go on forever. He was miserable in these dreams because he had forgotten that he was this being who was just dreaming dream after dream. The nightmares were so

real, so terrifying, so lonely and desperate! But he always awoke from the dreams and always remembered instantly that he is this being who had simply dreamed it all. Each awakening was ecstatic, beyond the greatest joy this being could ever have imagined. The return to the knowledge that he is this being brought perfect peace just from knowing that he, the dreamer, was beginningless, endless, and beyond all limitation.

But the joy this being felt upon awakening was short-lived, and the moments of joy were separated by more dreams of more struggle, more misery, and more fear. This being only felt truly joyful and peaceful when awakening from the dreams, yet he knew that the measure of this joy was never less than complete in every single reawakening.

Again, he tried something different. He began to dream many separate dreams together as one great dream within which all the separate dreams overlapped each other in space, time, and circumstances: one dream of many dreams together. Because each individual forgets who he really is, each seems to be only one among the many, separated from the others, struggling for survival. Of course, each separate dream eventually ends, and this being awakens. In each awakening, this being remembers again that he is this being. In this way, he is endlessly awakening from countless dreams. In every reawakening he remembers he is this being, he always has been this being, and he always will be this being, always beyond all limit. And the dream of life goes on and on with each life a different path to complete reawakening.

All individual beings experience suffering because they forget for a while that they are this being. But all this suffering is reduced, not multiplied, by dividing it among the many. The suffering of forgetting is made easier by the sharing of it, where all beings work together to reduce each other's suffering and pain.

Each awakening is a complete and absolute reawakening to reality. The joy of this is in no way diminished by the problems of life. It is perfect awareness of the reality of being this being, of being limitless reality. This being, self-aware and self-knowing, recalls every moment of every dream, not as a troubling recollection of miseries but as a wondrous journey home.

Nothing can reduce the peace and joy of this being who remembers the truth of every dream, that all lives reawaken to the knowledge they are the reality of everything.

Regarding this story, ...

What is reality?

What is this being?

Where is this being?

Where are all the individuals?

Who experiences what?

What is lucid dreaming?

4 - AWARENESS AND EXPERIENCE

AWARENESS: “Awareness” refers to direct knowledge of experience and intuition. Being is aware of and directly knows experience; and through intuition, being knows itself. Intuition is self-awareness of reality. (Awareness is sometimes referred to as direct experience, but in this context that is a misleading phrase.) Awareness is not subject to birth and death, nor to beginning or ending, nor to existing or not existing, even though all experiences within awareness (except intuition, which is really not an experience) are subject to these limits.

EXPERIENCE: “Experience” refers to the things that awareness is aware of. Experience is indirect knowledge of things; because of this, all experiences are sometimes referred to as indirect experience.

Awareness is where all experiences are experienced; it is where they happen. You might casually say, “I experience things.” But the idea that there is an I who experiences things is itself only another experience. It is more to the point to say that awareness is where experiences occur, that being is aware of all experiences, and

that this is reality. Being and awareness are two different ways of referring to or discussing reality.

*The only way to discover, learn, or
remember this is by intuition of exactly
what awareness, being, and reality are.*

*Look within yourself to know the real
meaning of awareness.*

There is no doubt at all that being, which is reality, is aware of its experiences. Experience is not what it appears to be because the individual things of existence and non-existence are not what they appear to be.

Sometimes it is said this way:

*Experiences are not what they seem to
be, but neither are they anything else.*

Paraphrased, experiences are illusory by nature, but awareness of this illusion is genuine.

Problems arise from the habit of thinking that existing things are exactly what they appear to be. This also applies to words; words are not what they appear to be. No word ever means the same thing between any two people, uses, or encounters, no matter how simple the word or how similar the circumstances.

To see a table is not the same as to see a real table. The belief that you see a real table is an unreal, indirect experience of ideas, words, and other gestures habitually re-projected into new possibilities. The belief that there are independently existing real things is habitual false judgement rooted in habitual repetition of ideas, words, and other gestures.

You really are aware of seeing a table, but you cannot experience the separate reality of any table. You really are aware of an idea about the table—because awareness is real—but you cannot experience the separate reality of any idea.

Do not think that the reality of experiencing things guarantees the separate reality of things that underpin the experience.

Here is a difficult problem to ponder:

Why do you think a tree really is what it appears to be?

There is no harm in casually using phrases such as “That is a real tree.” The harm lies in unexamined habitual use when you can, with some effort, demonstrate to yourself that no such objects, not even the ideas of objects, are real—not independently of one another and not independently of awareness. But awareness is real. Think about these questions:

How do you recognize a tree?

What happens as you experience recognizing a tree?

What did you see the instant before you recognized it as a tree?

Is it really a tree when no one is recognizing it?

Can you see a tree while not believing it is a tree?

If you see a tree in a photograph, do you believe you see a tree?

What does the word, “tree,” really mean to you?

You cannot experience your own awareness in the same way you experience seeing a tree. You must grasp (or experience) the idea of a tree in order to experience a tree; but to know awareness you must let go of everything that you experience. In this way, being is aware of itself.

If you truly wish to know what this means, then it is only a matter of time and effort. If you do not particularly wish to know what this means, then it is only a matter of time and interest. In either case, one day you will truly remember that you have always known.

Where Is Here (revisited 1)

You should still be thinking about the puzzle introduced in the first topic, *Words*.

This is not a trick question. The better your answer, the better your satisfaction with these topics. Only you can know how well you may have solved it.

Here are a few ideas to help you along:

Keep in mind what you have read so far about *Words*, *Reality and Unreality*, *Being and Existence*, and *Awareness and Experience*.

You can, of course, solve this puzzle in any way that pleases you; these topics are only here to offer you suggestions, ideas, and encouragement.

In keeping with this first topic, *Words*, you should pay attention to possible meanings of the words, “where,” “here,” and “is.”

Where and here do not have to be physical or geographical.

“Is” has at least two main uses: attribution, as in “the apple is red,” or identification, as in “this is the same apple.” You could also try to imagine other ways in which the word might be useful; try to imagine ways in which “is” can be used that are neither attributive nor identifying, or that somehow combine both possibilities.

Be creative, but also be reasonable.

Caution: I recommend that, for now, you not use a dictionary. Stay with the puzzle at hand rather than take on the puzzle of the dictionaries. We will consider dictionaries more in other topics. In any case, your solution to the puzzle might scarcely use words at all.

The next two topics expand upon the idea of *Awareness and Experience*.

5 - APPEARING AND APPEARANCE

APPEARING: “Appearing” refers to the fact that awareness is aware of things, without reference to what those things might be. For example, we might say that something is appearing on the horizon but we do not know what it is.

APPEARANCE: “Appearance” refers to the characteristics of things that are appearing. For example, we might say that something has the appearance of being a ship or it has an unknown appearance.

In common usage appearing and appearance can overlap in meaning. Appearing can mean almost the same as appearance, as in the phrase, “appearing to be a ship”; and appearance can mean almost the same as appearing, as in the phrase, “the sudden appearance of a ship.” But the intent here is to emphasize a difference in meaning between these words.

Consider again an entertainer twirling a firebrand. The sudden appearing of a circle of fire is real; it really did appear, whatever it was. But the appearance that it is a circle of fire is not real, because there is no circle of fire underlying that appearance.

We habitually overlook the fact that the appearing of something happens at all, mainly because we usually do not know what to do with that all-too-obvious reality. After all, this appearing of something happens very suddenly, and then we quickly focus on its appearance.

*We habitually focus on appearances,
which are neither more nor less than an
experience of something that is not real.*

We habitually ignore this awareness that is characteristic of reality, and we instead focus on the ephemeral and fragmented experiences that constitute unreality. You are certainly aware of the fact of the (sudden) appearing of a thing, but how certain are you about the appearance of that thing? So, where do you focus?

Don't you often get it wrong? You cannot be wrong if you understand that appearances are inherently unreal. It is not wrong to think that all appearances are unreal; sometimes it is just difficult or inconvenient.

To be clear, it is useful to assess appearances for what they represent and what they might mean to you; such considerations are mostly relevant in casual conversation and other practical matters. Practical matters do not conflict with the understanding that all appearances are unreal. Awareness itself is what is real.

Be practical. But first be aware.

You are aware (or you know) that you experience your world. Even if you are sleeping, appearances are constantly appearing and disappearing.

There can never be a moment when you are aware of nothing at all. There is no such thing as nothing at all. There are no moments of awareness when awareness is aware of nothing at all. Being is always aware of itself, and reality is always aware of being.

Experiences come and go within awareness. Individuals come and go within being. Illusions come and go within reality.

Awareness, being, and reality are not different from one another. What can this mean?

Seeing a Tree

Debbie studies art at a small university in the middle part of the country, far from the ocean and far from the city. She is serious about learning the art she has chosen. One of her teachers has given her an assignment to help improve her skills in visualizing.

She is to create an image that illustrates what it is like to suddenly recognize a tree that stands alone in a green and peaceful place. She is already a modestly skilled artist. This assignment is an advanced exercise designed to help her develop her powers of seeing things.

Her teacher has instructed her, "To know what it is like to suddenly see a tree, you must sit quietly in a comfortable place and confront the problem. Look at the tree. Then, with your eyes closed, roll your head around just a little and find a comfortable position. Suddenly open your eyes, but do not move your eyes to look for the tree because by then it will be too late to see how you knew the tree. Eyes still! Watch the tree appear in your vision." The teacher paused a little. "Now, while looking straight ahead, just ask yourself, 'How did I know it was a tree?' Practice this, and let me know what you discover."

Debbie practiced diligently, at least two hours every afternoon. At first the tree was just always there to be seen without much going on. By the end of the first day, she noticed that there was a short delay between opening her eyes and seeing the tree. On the second day, Debbie noticed that the details of the tree did not appear all at once as the tree appeared. By the fourth day, she could easily see the tree unfold gradually in her eyes, from not there to barely there, to more and more detail,

all in maybe a half of a second or less. That was very interesting, but she kept practicing to see what else she could discover.

Several more afternoons passed, and then Debbie got a surprise. She had closed her eyes and waited a little longer before popping them open again. The tree was gone. In its place was flowing light of many colors with shimmering silvery threads peeking out from between the hues. Debbie saw this amazing sight for only a few seconds, and then the tree was there among the things around it. It was as if her mind had for a moment neglected to notice what trees look like. She saw the flowing light become a tree all made of that gently sparkling light. The earth, grass, and sky grew out of the same light. And then there was the tree just as she had always seen it, standing in the grass, reaching up from the ground toward the sky above.

Debbie told her instructor, as best she could, what she had seen. But the instructor told her to go back and look again. He told her she might have overlooked something.

Debbie returned to the tree to look again. And look again, and again, and again to see what she might have missed. A week passed, then another. Now and then she saw the flowing light again, but not the same as it was the first time. She understood how the experience of seeing the tree grew in the light of her vision in these afternoons. Sometimes she recognized the silvery threads merging together with her vision and understanding. There was a hint of it in every glance. But she was sad that she had not seen anything really different.

One day Debbie wearily closed her eyes to try again. When she popped her eyes open again, she was not really looking for anything at all. She was just looking to see what was there. And there it was. There was the flowing color and silver, all in its original brilliance and mystery, and this time it was very different. This time it was Debbie's own mind that painted the light with her

own memories of trees and earth and sky and all else that she could see. It happened inside her, that the memories of colors and forms of things flowed out into the light to lay down in her mind's eye the simple perception of this one tree beneath this one sky.

"Good," said the instructor. "Now turn that into art so someone else can see it too."

What was Debbie aware of in the moment before she recognized the tree?

What was she aware of in the moment she recognized the tree?

What happened between those two moments?

What else happened before and after recognition?

What does recognition look like?

What does it feel like?

When she recognized the tree, what was it that she first recognized about the tree?

6 - SELF AND OTHER

SELF: “Self” has two meanings: true and false. True self is direct self-knowledge of being. The true meaning of self cannot be expressed in any statements; instead, it is self-awareness without any word or representation. False self is reference to, or representation of, the experience of some particular form, idea, sensation, or name. The false meaning of self is expressed indirectly in statements, ideas, or inclinations, usually of the form, “I am this” or “I am that.” This false meaning of self is reference to other and not direct reference to self. False self is not self at all, it is other (than self).

*The real meaning of self cannot be
expressed in statements, not even in
statements like these.*

OTHER: “Other,” in this sense, refers to what is not real; it refers to unreality.

True self is reality. Only direct knowledge of self is true self-knowledge of being. True self is the same as self-awareness, which is the same as being and the same as reality. Therefore, true self is not subject to

birth and death, nor to beginning and ending, nor to existing or not existing, while things that are not true self—ego, personality, experience, image—are subject to these limits.

*Self-knowledge of being cannot be
conveyed from one person to another.*

Self-awareness cannot be re-presented. It is reality itself. Self-awareness is not an experience; it is instead the reality of all experiences.

However, in practice we often do refer to real self-knowledge of being in statements such as “I am this” or “You are this.” This is casual usage, and we do this because we want to convey something about ourselves to others. But true self cannot be conveyed in this way. Even so, such statements can sometimes provide comfort or encouragement to others and can sometimes trigger self-awareness in someone who is in any case predisposed to true self-awareness at that moment.

Indirect reference to self is reference wholly within the unreal content of experience. We might see ourselves in the mirror, but we cannot see awareness in the mirror, nor can we see being, because awareness and being are not things that we can experience. Instead, experiences are things we (being) can be aware of. Experience does not contain awareness; awareness contains experience, and awareness is being.

Objects in the mirror are something other than self. Objects in experience are something other than self. For convenience we casually refer to our bodies, our minds, or our other characteristics as ‘myself’ or ‘ourselves’—this is useful, but it is misleading as to the nature of being.

*You are not what you think you are; you
are the awareness of these thoughts.*

*You are not what you experience; you
are the reality of these experiences.*

We are aware of what we experience, but we habitually confuse awareness with the experiences that arise within awareness. We habitually project an idea of awareness onto unreal objects that we experience, and we think there must be some real awareness within these objects. This is habitual confusion born of word-repetitions learned from childhood.

The illusion of an awareness arising within the object is an attractive illusion. The reality is that all objects arise within experience, experience arises within awareness, and awareness is reality.

Most of our experience is centered, literally, around the idea of a body, a mind, and so forth that we call “myself.” This is a useful idea. But in reality, this idea that I have about myself is an idea that arises within unreal experience; so, an experience of myself really is an unreal experience, and the idea of it really is an unreal idea. This does not mean that individuals, each with individual selves, are not present in experience. They really are present, but only as illusion. They are present only as ephemeral ideas when compared to the reality of awareness and being.

The self is nowhere to be found in the world.

Paraphrased, the world arises within undivided awareness and not the other way around; so, where is there a place in the world for a separate awareness?

To see this clearly is to intuit the true nature of awareness and experience.

In ordinary conversation, the two ways of using “self”—self-knowledge and self-in-other—are confusing. Awareness and being cannot be re-presented and cannot inhabit unreal things. The habit of thinking and speaking only in indirect self-reference is a habit of ignoring reality. You can dispel this habit.

If you are willing to examine all of your assumptions, you can resolve any problem.

The Flowering of a Wonderful Law

Once there was a man who was both very knowledgeable and very wise. One day he entered into a great meditation. Within his meditation he taught a vast number of other beings about a Wonderful Law governing all beings; he says this Law is very important for everyone to know. The occasion of this teaching is sometimes referred to as *Teaching on the Lotus of the Wonderful Law*.

The person who taught this lesson was known at that time as The Awakened. All the other beings to whom The Awakened taught the Law appeared only as part of the meditation itself; in fact, the whole event occurs entirely within and as part of the dream-like meditation that The Awakened had attained on that day. Present were countless followers and disciples of The Awakened; there were great numbers of teachers of the Law, and there were a few other beings who were actually other lives of The Awakened who had come forward from other, very distant worlds and times.

There were also several imaginary (or transcendent) beings present; each of these beings personified certain aspects of the Law that The Awakened was teaching. Here are the names of a few of the imaginary beings who were present: Perfect Wisdom, Infinite Life, Hearer of All Cries, Complete Healing, Radiant Virtue, Golden Light, and Limitless Joy.

This is the Law:

Every being in the universe will attain perfect wisdom and understanding, and

will be completely saved from all suffering and misery.

This is the Corollary to the Law:

No being can ever be led by another to the attainment of perfect wisdom or understanding, nor can any being ever be saved by another being.

The mechanism of the Law can be explained somewhat by what The Awakened said to the imaginary beings:

Because you believe you are different from me, you are not yet The Awakened.

But because you are me, it is the Law that one day you will be awakened to the knowledge that you already are The Awakened.

You are The Awakened, but you are not yet awakened to the fact that you are The Awakened.

Why is this referred to as a Flowering or a Lotus?
According to this story, what is the true nature of reality and being?

Why can't The Awakened lead other beings to perfect wisdom and save them from suffering and misery? In reality, how many other beings are there?

Why does the teaching occur in meditation?

How does a teacher teach other beings that each of them is exactly the same being as the teacher who is teaching them?

7 - CONTAINER AND CONTENT

CONTAINER: “Container” refers to something that is used to gather or select other things. Here are several examples of containers: a basket, a fence, a room, the sky, a list, an idea, this paragraph, rules, choices, moments, and so forth. It does not necessarily refer to a physical object, such as a basket or a written list, nor to an abstract object, such as a category, a possibility, or a context. Container simply refers to criteria or methods for selecting things.

CONTENT: “Content” refers to things that are gathered or selected into some kind of container: apples in a basket, cows inside the fence, clouds in the sky, attributes of some object, objects sharing some attribute, numbers that are even, sensations, other containers, the letters [a, b, c], important things, and so forth.

Container and content refer to things and to how things are related to one another. “Thing” refers to whatever you can imagine it to refer to, except that it cannot truly refer to or represent reality, being, awareness, and such.

These simple and abstract meanings for container and content are extraordinarily useful in almost every aspect of experience. Even though the idea of containers may appear simple and straightforward, and even though nearly every person uses the idea of containers easily, most do not fully understand the concept of containers and content. Neither do they understand its limitations.

Container and content are ways of referring to different things depending on whether or not these things meet certain criteria. In this sense, a container refers to ways of selecting things according to their characteristics. Consider each of the following criteria that might be used to select things from a box; do these make sense to you?

Invisible things.

Colors.

Spaces.

Things with names.

Things that do not belong there.

Things without shape.

Useless things.

Nothing.

Things on top of other things.

Only one thing (just choose it).

A guide for exploration:

Reality contains everything, real or unreal.

Being contains everything that can in any way be said to exist, even hypothetically.

Awareness contains all that can be experienced in any way at any time.

Where Is Here (revisited 2)

When considering this puzzle, be careful how you judge the meanings of the words. We typically take “here” to refer to some physical, spatial, or temporal location: on the table, in the middle, or now. But if you expand your thinking a little by interpreting the puzzle more as a question of container and content, other possibilities arise.

What does the word, “*here*,” mean to you right now as you read this question?

What contains that meaning? Is it public or is it private?

What does the phrase, “*Where ...*,” mean to you right now as you read this question?

What does the phrase, “*Here is where ...*,” mean to you right now?

Reflect for a moment on how you reacted to those questions: your thoughts, feelings, ideas, various attempts to answer in words, and so forth.

The next six topics expand upon the idea of container and content. Before you turn to these topics, consider carefully how you react to each of these words as you read them:

Universe

Allow

Choose

Represent

Anticipate

Know

8 - UNIVERSE AND WORLD

UNIVERSE: “Universe” refers to whatever is possible to experience in any way at all, throughout time and place. There is only one universe. The universe only includes things that have been, are being, or will be experienced. This universe contains all that can ever be experienced of unreality.

The universe contains every possible illusion and nothing else.

The universe does not contain anything that never has been experienced and never will be experienced.

WORLD: “World,” in the abstract sense of the word, refers to the way some experiences appear as containers of other experiences, where a containing experience unifies many contained experiences into a single experience. World, in the general or more casual sense, refers to some part of the universe that contains many experiences along with many other, smaller worlds. Each individual’s entire life is a world, and within that world there are smaller worlds. A world-view is a broad perspective into a world, a way of understanding it through

ideas and beliefs. There are multiple worlds within the universe, and there are multiple worlds and world-views within these worlds.

This is not a common definition of “universe.” The common definitions allow the separate existence of things that cannot be experienced—for example, in the so-called universe of all possible numbers. But such existences have no reality of their own; and if they are not experienced, then there is no real awareness of them either. Such existences are no more than imaginary ideas.

Instead, this definition of universe equates the existence of a thing with the experience of that thing while leaving open the interesting questions of what actually experiences what, how does that happen, and when does that happen.

To exist, a thing must be experienced in some way at some time. Therefore, it is likely not true that all possible numbers exist, because we know of numbers that we can never experience as such, even though we can experience ideas about those numbers. Those ideas do exist in our world, and so they exist in the universe.

The universe and all that is in it seems real because awareness is real. But the universe has no reality of its own. The universe is an apparition arising within reality, being, and awareness. The content of experience is unreal, and the whole idea of existing or not existing is also unreal.

As an individual, the world that you seem to perceive through your world-views is unreal. The distinction between your world and the world of another is also unreal. It seems there can be only one reality, one being, and one awareness; but the terms, “one” and “many,” do not really apply to reality, being, and awareness.

Reality allows and contains unreality. By habit born of repetition, we experience the idea that there are one or many things existing or not existing all around and within us at different times.

Do you believe that in some way you sense the reality of other beings and these other beings possess their own awareness? This is like looking into a magical mirror wherein you are made to experience your life as only one among others. In the mirror, you cling to the idea that you are a separate living thing who senses being. To do so, you ignore the reality of your own being and cling to the unreality of separate existences. But reality is undivided. So, being and awareness are undivided. It is only from within illusion that we can imagine reality as somehow divided.

Look to the deepest level of your own being. Reality is not just another thing to be experienced.

*Reality and unreality,
being and existence,
awareness and experience,
intuition and universe.*

*What do these words mean to you? How
are the meanings related?*

The Seer and the Seen

This is from the traditional story of Purusha and Prakriti, a story that originated in India at least 2,600 years ago; some say 14,000 years ago or more. This is a very short version of the original.

Purusha is known as the one who sees; he sees everything that can be seen. He has no form or body of his own. Initially, Purusha was happy and quite satisfied with himself, then Prakriti came along.

Prakriti is known as the dancer or the one who creates. When she dances, she can assume any imaginable shape and form. Prakriti is happy dancing for anyone who will watch her.

Prakriti arrived one day and began dancing for Purusha, even though Purusha did not particularly want to watch her. In fact, Purusha was annoyed at first because Prakriti had interrupted his peacefulness. But the more Prakriti danced, the more Purusha was fascinated. While Purusha watched, Prakriti's dance grew very complex: richer and richer in variety, substance, color, music, and so much more. Prakriti danced the dance of a great world of sights, sounds, aromas, movements, pleasures, and pains all just for Purusha to see.

In time, Purusha became so entranced by Prakriti's dance that he completely forgot how the dance had begun or where Prakriti had come from. It was maddening to Purusha that most of the time he could scarcely fathom what was happening in the dance. He often got so caught up in the sensations and emotions of the spectacle that he grasped wildly at it to get hold of Prakriti and make her stop just so he could clear his head and understand what it all meant. But Prakriti did not stop dancing, and she easily evaded Purusha's silly grasping.

Eventually Purusha became so entranced by Prakriti that he forgot it was only a dance; he even forgot that this was just Prakriti dancing for him. One day, dismayed by his inability to comprehend all that was happening and what it all meant, Purusha was no longer able to watch. He calmed his mind and focused his attention, and once again he became satisfied with just being himself, just the one who sees.

In that moment, Prakriti stopped dancing and revealed to Purusha her true appearance. Prakriti's true appearance is known today as Kind Prakriti to distinguish it from the many forms she assumes as she dances. There was no sign anywhere of the dance, no

movement, no music, no forms, no substance. Kind Prakriti revealed herself, and Purusha recognized her instantly.

Why did Prakriti stop dancing?

What did Purusha see when he recognized Kind Prakriti?

What emotions did Purusha feel when he recognized Kind Prakriti?

What did Prakriti do next?

What does this have to do with worlds and world-views?

What is Prakriti?

Where did Prakriti come from?

9 - ALLOWING AND JUDGING

ALLOWING: “Allowing” refers to the intentional quality of awareness. The intent is to allow. Awareness allows experience to appear, being allows existence to appear, and reality allows unreality to appear.

JUDGING: “Judging” refers to habitual attachment to apparent choices. The intent is to directly or indirectly disallow some things. Some choices seem more or less unconscious, but many are consciously entertained by habitual reference to words and phrases that affirm these choices.

Judgement is closely related to discrimination. We judge this or that according to some standard, and we discriminate between this and that according to a similar standard.

We discriminate between good and evil and judge some things to be one or the other, or at least to be more of one than of the other.

We discriminate among different kinds of value and judge some things to be of positive value, some to be of no particular value, and some to be of negative value. Similarly, we discriminate shades of better and worse.

We discriminate between what we want to have and what we want to avoid, and we judge these things according to value, cost, risk, and so forth.

We discriminate among decisions we have made in the past and judge these decisions on how well we decided, all according to present-day values, preferences, and so forth.

We discriminate in regard to our perceived self-worth and judge our actions and thoughts accordingly; but we also judge ourselves as a whole, entirely to our own misery one way or another.

We discriminate between choice and no choice and judge whether or not we have some form of freedom of choice; but in reality, the only possibility is to allow the world to unfold as it certainly will.

We discriminate living things from non-living things, and we judge relative worth among the kinds of things discovered—all in fine gradations of personal values and preferences. Judging is the basis of all desire.

All judging is the habitual and fervent entertainment of illusion. It is neither more nor less than the universe unfolding what is possible to experience and what is not possible.

Reality expresses itself through being.

Being knows itself through awareness.

Be aware of the infinite possibilities of experience.

Be aware of judgements and discriminations, just as you are aware of your own being.

Be aware of what you sacrifice when you judge and discriminate.

Discrimination and judgement are bad habits. Misfortune follows from bad habits. Allowing expands awareness. In expanded awareness, habits dissipate.

We Always Do the Best We Can

Why do people act the way they do? Actions are the things we do; motives are inner forces behind the actions, whether or not we really know what these forces are. Careless actions lead to careless habits, in the face of which, motives can be forgotten, ignored, or even denied.

We typically object not to the motives of others but to their actions and habits. Compared to actions, motives are private. Even if someone tells us their motives, we might not understand or believe what they say; after all, saying things is just another form of action. In any case, it is impossible to completely explain all our motives for any given action.

*Think of all individual beings as part of
your world.*

*Think of yourself as all life everywhere
throughout all time.*

What would it feel like to know that all beings ever to exist have always done the best they could? Is this difficult to imagine?

Do you often think you should have done better? This is called second-guessing, and it is a bad habit. We have all been criticized for not doing our best, and we have all criticized others and ourselves in the same way, but it is a false criticism. We are limited beings with limited ability to examine our motives for any given action. We have many bad habits, and the circumstances of life are difficult and deceptive. Our motives are complex and often contradict one another.

All children are born with the desire to do good things and to do the best they can at all times, even when they are only playing or just trying to behave badly. Beyond

that, motives become complicated and contradictory. The original motive, to do good and always do the best we can, always remains; but because of other conflicting and confusing motives, our actions and habits become difficult to understand. An example:

*Edward committed a crime. We caught
Edward and punished him for his crime.*

We all do the best we can. There are no exceptions. This defines all motivation from the deepest core of our being. We might judge our actions and other motives as good or bad, but we always do the best we can in everything we do, even if we know at the moment we act that what we are doing will cause harm.

*What if you knew and understood all of
the motives behind every human action?*

You would see that everyone always does the best they can whether or not they always believe so about themselves. Even deliberately harming another person arises from the motive to do the best we can; it was the best we could do in the moment when we believed we had to do it now, even though in the minds of so many others what we did was wrong.

All beings are gifted with a wordless, thoughtless memory of limitless being, which is by its nature perfectly good, without exception.

Why do we forget, ignore, or even deny the unchanging reality of this being? Because we became addicted to pretending it isn't so; because we learned to think that this is bad and that is good; and because we applied this addiction to everything.

Do not second-guess your motives, your thoughts, or your actions. Learn from everything that happens. Take responsibility for what you do. Reflect on your life. Know that you have always done the best you could, no matter how good or bad the result.

10 - ALLOWING AND CHOOSING

When a rock rolls down a hill, it takes a certain path across the terrain. The rock takes the path that was chosen for it by the universe according to the circumstances at that moment. The universe chooses this path by allowing natural universal factors—physical, gravitational, allowing, and so forth—to determine events. This is not a common understanding of the word, “choose.”

When a person falls down a hill, that person takes a certain path across the terrain. If the person is unable to stop the rough descent, then the person might struggle to alter the path by such tactics as grabbing at objects, dragging hands and feet, rolling, sliding, and so forth. The universe allows universal factors to determine the course of the fall. These are the same factors that affect the path of the rock plus similar natural factors that determine the person’s actions while falling.

We commonly attribute choice only to persons, or perhaps also to other living beings. This is false judgement perpetuated by habitual word phrases. There are two kinds of error in this:

- People believe they can exercise free choice as to their own actions and judgements. This belief is an illusion. Individual choice is not real. “Free choice” is a superficial label that minimizes the natural and universal factors that cause events to unfold as they do. False labeling is perpetuated by habit. We cannot make free choice because we are driven in virtually every aspect of life by the universe within which this world appears. This does not mean there is no choice. It means that the universe determines all choices according to its own nature.
- People ignore allowing. To allow is to be aware of the difference between allowing and choosing. When you allow, your world within this universe will continue on and will take care of itself. Allowing is a universal factor because it is the intentional quality of awareness. Within awareness, all choice is driven by the universe. Reality allows this.

There is no freedom of choice apart from the illusion of it. This illusion is perpetuated by the habit of clinging to the idea of separate beings. All choice is resolved naturally by the universe as a whole. There are no free actors to be found anywhere in the universe, just as there is no self to be found anywhere in the world.

Expand your awareness beyond the confines of habitual labels and illusions.

Allowing is the intentional quality of being and reality.

How do you allow there to be no individual choice, no freedom of choice? By realizing that all your actions unfold according to universal factors.

Simply allow.

Do not choose to allow, simply allow.

Allowing is real.

Choice and rejection do not apply to allowing.

“Freedom of choice” is a habitual word phrase that represents only illusion.

When by intuition you are aware of the reality of illusion, you are aware of the true meaning of the universe of all possible experiences.

*If freedom of choice is only an illusion,
does that really change your world?*

The Magician’s Trick

Ralph was beyond unhappy. He had wandered down a miserable path and into a dark forest. He recalled the words that The Poet saw: “Abandon Hope.” But he said to himself, “So what.”

Ralph heard a voice from the side of the path: “Hey, Ralph, got a minute?”

Ralph turned to look where the voice came from, and there in the woods stood some old guy dressed in a magician’s hat and robe, waving his hand for Ralph to come over. So, Ralph went to him, since there was nothing else to do. How did the magician know Ralph’s name? Well, he was a magician, wasn’t he.

“Show you a good magic trick, Ralph?” “Sure.” So, the magician waved his hands in the air, and there appeared in the woods the image of a great landscape. In this magical place there stood all manner of people and animals, and all kinds of trees and grasses and other natural things. Ralph was amazed.

“Just watch,” said the magician as he waved his hands again. The people and animals moved quickly. Life was unfolding rapidly in the image. Ralph saw how these creatures were all fighting and struggling with one

another, fighting over a patch of ground, cutting each other, killing one another for every scrap of food that might be found. Still faster, this was a many-headed monster tearing itself limb from limb and devouring itself piece by piece. People and animals, and even the plants, were killing and eating each other just for a little more food. They cried out in horror at their terrible lives. The magician commented, "This is true suffering, Ralph, kill and then be killed, no choice, no hope for anything better than this." Ralph asked, "Why are you showing this to me?"

"Watch carefully, Ralph." The magician stepped toward the image and flew into it. He sat down right in the middle with life all around him. The people and the animals at once fell upon him; they beat him, bit him, and clawed at him. But they could do him no harm, no matter how hard they tried. They screamed in frustration.

The magician sat there in the image, staring back at Ralph who looked puzzled and shook his head in disbelief. The magician spread his hands a little to his sides, tilted his head a bit and shrugged as if to say, "What do you expect, Ralph, it's a magician's trick."

A few of the people in the trick became curious about the quiet magician. How could he just calmly sit there like that? A few stopped struggling and sat down beside him. They sat the way he sat and calmed themselves the best they could. The magician produced a rabbit that he turned loose at his feet. The rabbit started to run away, but before it got very far it faded from sight. The magician sat quietly. A hungry wolf lunged at him, baring its fangs and snarling. The magician reached out his hand and touched the wolf on the tip of its nose, stopping its attack. The wolf settled to the ground to sit at the magician's feet. Those who sat quietly with the magician watched all of this unfold. They sat as if nothing notable had happened. Amid the great chaos, these few were peaceful.

The magician rose and stepped out of the scene to stand beside Ralph again. He sent the image away with a wave of his hand. He spoke to Ralph: "Let me ask you a couple of Questions." Ralph nodded. "Was there anyone in that image who was saved from misery?"

Ralph said, "Yes, several were saved from their misery; they sat there with you."

The magician nodded and then asked, "Is there anyone here who was saved from that misery?"

Ralph said, "There is no one here who was saved from that misery; it was all a trick of the mind."

The magician nodded. He said, "That is surprisingly difficult to notice."

Ralph smiled at the magician's trick as he continued on his way.

Who chose what?

Who allowed what?

What was the result?

How might it have happened some other way?

If you believe the world is just an illusion, what is the value of helping others?

Who helps whom?

Who benefits, and in what way?

In regard to this story, remember ***We Always Do the Best We Can*** and ***The Seer and the Seen***.

11 - EXPERIENCING AND REPRESENTING

EXPERIENCING: “Experiencing” refers to awareness of unreal things. All experiences of every kind are unreal things.

REPRESENTING: “Representing” refers to an aspect of experiencing in which experiences refer to other things. Representation occurs when one thing re-presents or refers to other things that are not present in the immediate experience. For example, a photograph of a tree represents or refers to a tree that is not present in the photograph. A patch of green refers to or represents virtually all past experiences of color to give meaning to the current color-experience through comparisons, contrasts, and memories.

It is like reading or hearing the names of people in a family. The names refer to family members who may or may not be present. The name alone does not provide an experience of that person, although it may stimulate the experience of an idea or memory of that person; and the name only has meaning in relation to other experiences, memories, ideas, confusions, and so forth.

Chains of representation never have a first link, because representations represent only other representations.

It is like a child who confounds her parents by endlessly asking, "Why?" or "What does that mean?"

Awareness allows representations of things that are not immediately present in awareness. Each experience indirectly refers to other experiences that are not immediately present in awareness. Experiences have content, and all content represents or refers to other experiences, memories, and ideas. All experiences arise and have meaning only in relation to the meaning of other experiences.

This is what is meant by relativity of experience.

Chains of representation become confused. In casual conversation we generally ignore this confusion (or we might even make some use of it). Deep chains of representation are impossible to trace, and the universe is immeasurably deep in representations of other representations. Every world is a world of representing and referring. Every representation is a container. Every container is made entirely of other containers.

This is relativity of existence:

No existing thing is what it appears to be; everything is relative.

In Set Theory, a formal language of containers, no container can ever contain itself, nor can it contain any other container that contains that container. But in experience, this rule is almost universally broken.

Notice how every word in a dictionary is defined almost entirely by reference to other words in that same dictionary. This is acceptable in casual use because we instinctively know that no two instances of any word can have exactly the same meaning. Words acquire

meanings more by usage than by definition. Every instance of a word has a unique meaning because each occurs in a different context, and meaning arises only from context. We want and assume consistent meanings for words, but meanings change according to context, and every context is unique across the universe.

Experiences define one another in the same way that words define one another in dictionaries.

This is relativity of meaning:

*The entire universe of meaning arises
only from relativity.*

Reality, being, and awareness cannot be experienced. Unreality cannot represent reality. Existence cannot represent being. Experience cannot represent awareness. Being and awareness are the reality of the universe.

Your reality can never be re-presented.

Is this a puzzle? Is it really not possible to represent your reality, being, or awareness in words, symbols, gestures, and so forth? Seek direct knowledge of reality, not indirect experience of mere ideas about such things. Know the truth directly. See though the endless puzzles of unreality.

*Depend upon words only to help you
grasp the failure of all words in the light
of your reality—even these words, here,
in this text.*

The Five Paths

This is from the mountains of Tibet. It is not exactly a story. Some might read it as instruction, and some might read it as just a tall tale. You can easily find other versions of *The Five Paths*; just look for one that appeals to you.

These five paths are often couched in terms of reincarnation through numerous life-times. If you do not care for reincarnation, think instead of relative numbers of people in a population, like “out of every 125,000 only a few will have any good idea of what wisdom is, while maybe only one has actually found true wisdom.” On the other hand, you might think of these as different phases of learning. Be flexible. Like all stories, it is up to you to interpret this the best way you can.

The Five Paths is a good puzzle to consider if you have even the slightest curiosity about such ideas or experiences. Ask yourself this: To what do the words refer? What is their purpose?

*Life-Time. Meaning. Happen. Understand.
Accomplish. Succeed. Fail. Wisdom. The Best You Can.
Devotion. Teacher. Try. Rest. Realize. Form. Formless.
See. Hear. Stained-Glass. Window. Mirror. Time.
Peaceful. Become. Know. Obvious. Again.*

These five paths are to be completed sequentially:

1ST PATH: ACCUMULATION (125,000 life-times). Struggle. Little to no sign of any reason or meaning to life. You may fail at whatever you do; you may be successful and have a great family around you; you may be wealthy; you may be famous for your accomplishments or your knowledge; you may toil long and hard just to make ends meet; you may love and protect nature and the people around you. But you do not understand why there is all this misery and suffering. This lack of understanding and lack of real meaning slowly eats away at you until sometimes you feel you cannot take it any longer.

2ND PATH: WISDOM (100 life-times). Signs. You begin to hear or learn something that seems right to you. You do not yet understand why it seems right. You try to do the

best you can with this insight. You might talk about it with other people, and it might appear that you are all talking about the same thing or at least something similar (on the same page, from the same teacher, the same ideas), but deep down you know that you do not understand what these things mean. All you can do is work harder and do the best you can with what you have. Trying as hard as you can. Resting when you can.

3RD PATH: SEEING (3 seconds). Suddenly. Without form, without thought, letting go. An image that is not standing still, yet there is nothing in it that moves. Not silent. Not distant. Like a stained-glass window too near to touch. Like a mirror seeing itself.

4TH PATH: MEDITATION (3 life-times). Time. The potter finishes the pot and takes his hands away from the clay; he must let the wheel spin down on its own or the pot will be ruined. Sitting quietly and at peace, immersed in the stream, becoming the stream.

5TH PATH: NO MORE LEARNING (completing the final life-time). The end of the search. Now you know. Now you understand. There is nothing more to do. It is so simple and once again so obvious.

In your view of this story, ...

What is an individual life or life-time?

What are worlds and world-views?

What does the 3rd Path represent?

What is intuition?

What does the 5th Path represent?

What is relativity?

Why are there any paths at all?

How far away is reality?

12 - ANTICIPATING, SELECTING, AND RECOGNIZING

ANTICIPATING: “Anticipating” refers to awareness of an idea, however vague it may be, that something specific may or may not happen.

SELECTING: “Selecting” refers to awareness of a judgement (or preference) that something represented in an anticipation or idea should or should not happen. We select what is judged desirable and reject what is judged undesirable. It is the same in all forms of judgement, in that a judgement asserts an attachment to (or avoidance of) a particular experience, anticipation, or idea.

RECOGNIZING: “Recognizing” refers in this case to consciously expressing acknowledgement of a particular selection or other judgement, either silently to oneself or aloud.

You anticipate or select certain food, and you might or might not recognize doing so. Do you often chat with yourself or with others about the way you recognize things?

Recognizing refers to conscious and usually wordy acknowledgement of events and judgements. Recognition is more than simple awareness of something. The focus moves away from the thing being recognized—an anticipation, a selection, an expectation, a likelihood, a possibility, and so forth—to focus on and re-present the significance of it instead.

*Anticipating, selecting, and recognizing
all unfold naturally according to
universal factors.*

Re-cognition is a way of saying to oneself, “There is so and so,” “I want this,” or “Watch out for such and such.” Recognition seems unavoidable, especially in moments of surprise, confusion, or doubt. But recognizing is not really necessary.

Re-cognition re-presents the original more as a judgement than as a selection or anticipation.

The progress from possibility to idea, to anticipation, to selection, and to recognition can happen very quickly, just like seeing a tree. If you look carefully, you can watch it happen.

*Anticipation and selection do not need to
be represented in recognition.*

*Ideas about what may or may not
happen do not need to be represented in
anticipation or selection.*

*What may or may not happen does not
need to be represented in ideas.*

Awareness is real, while anticipation, selection, recognition, and ideas have no reality of their own.

Representation occurs naturally, but certain tendencies, representations, and actions can become habitual, just like the habit of talking to oneself about things.

It is not difficult to dissect these habits if you are patient and attentive.

Can you see a stop sign on the road and not silently say the word, “Stop”? Can you notice a familiar face without saying anything to yourself in recognition of that face? Can you anticipate a problem without inwardly discussing it with yourself? Of course you can.

*Awareness does not need recognition,
but it happens. Allow it, notice it, and let
it go.*

*Anticipation, selection, recognition, and
ideation are habits of unreality; notice
what they are, what they do, and what
they do not do.*

Questions Children Ask

Lucy (age 8) asks Tom (age 12) and Jan (age 10) a few serious questions.

L: *Can God create a rock so big He can't move it?*

T: It's just a bad question. It's like asking, “Can I think of something that I can't think of?” Questions like that are stupid. We shouldn't question God like this.

J: One day God wants a rock that's too big to move, so He creates it and He can't move it. The next day God creates all the strength He needs to move it. It's a question that teaches you think.

L: *If God is always good, why does he allow people and animals to suffer and die?*

T: God knows best, and He can do whatever He wants. We should never doubt what God does.

J: When we die, maybe we really just wake up and suddenly look back at all this, and we see it wasn't bad at all; we just didn't understand what was going on. If

we don't know what is going on, then it feels really bad. Maybe one day we'll understand; we'll remember everything and how it all felt, and we'll feel so good about having been a part of it all. And all the animals will be there too; and we'll all wonder at how we were so wrong back then.

L: *If God knows everything and He can see the future and everything, why does He make people go to hell forever?*

T: God knows what's best. God knows what's right and what's wrong, and God just won't tolerate disobedience. God told us to obey or else. God warned us, and we need to obey.

J: Some people live a horrible life, like they think they are living in hell. Then they wake up and remember every bit of it; but now they aren't there any more, now they're here looking back. Back then they thought they were in hell, and that can never be changed. But now they are here and they are happy because now they understand why it had to be like that. It's hard to explain.

L: *If God is very wise, knows what is right, and always tells the truth, then why did He tell Abraham to kill his own son and then change His mind like that?*

T: God wants obedience to God's law, and God does not have to explain why. God was testing Abraham to see if Abraham would obey. God can change His mind whenever He wants to.

J: I remember that story, but I don't think I understand it. Maybe Abraham didn't think about life the way God thought he should and God was just trying to teach him. Maybe God was telling Abraham that he had to

give up everything he has before he can understand life the way God wants him to.

L: *If I never heard of the Bible before and just found out about it, why should I believe it?*

T: We have to believe the Bible because the Bible tells us so. I mean, what if we don't believe it and we're wrong, then we would go to hell forever, and that's too risky.

J: Watch out for trying hard to believe something just because you think you should or because someone tells you to. Trust what you already understand, either because you can see for yourself it's true or because it just makes the best sense to you. Whenever you believe something, think about why you believe it and whether it makes sense to you to believe it the way you do.

How is this story related to recognition, selection, and anticipation?

Read this story again, this time without adding your own recognition, selection, or anticipation.

Remember ***The Flowering of a Wonderful Law*** and ***The Magician's Trick***.

13 - KNOWING AND INTUITING

KNOWING: “Knowing” refers to the inherent certainty of awareness, being, and reality. Knowing is characteristic of being. Being directly knows awareness and reality in the same way that it knows itself. Self-knowing is being that knows itself as being, as reality, and as awareness.

INTUITING: “Intuiting” refers to the expanding of awareness from the narrowly focused content of an experience to the limitless character of awareness itself. It also refers to awareness of the limitless character of being and reality. Intuition unveils the meaning and purpose of unreality.

*Intuition is a moment in clear awareness
of being and reality.*

*In reality, being is aware of itself.
What does this mean?*

Experience is unreal and illusory, but awareness of experience is real. Intuition reveals the meaning of all experience: why experience appears within awareness, why existence appears within being, and why unreality appears within reality.

There are two basic forms of knowing. There is 'knowing-what,' that refers to direct awareness of reality or unreality; and there is 'knowing-that,' that refers to the unreal, indirect experience of representing or referring to things by using words, symbols, gestures, and so forth. For example, you *know what* a particular color of red looks like to you just by looking at it, but you might not *know that* it resembles some particular shade of orange to which it is sometimes compared.

*Intuition is like reality seeing itself
reflected in a mirror.*

What could be seen with such a mirror?

Experiences arise within awareness. Intuition is awareness of the immediacy of things and *knowing what* that immediacy truly means. But experiences often overwhelm intuition as we become entranced by the endless spectacle of the universe.

*When experience overwhelms intuition,
some experiences become habitual.*

Awareness *knows what* experiences are by experiencing them. Awareness intuits self-awareness by being self-aware, such as when awareness is aware of itself or when being knows itself.

Intuition of awareness is self-awareness.

*Intuition of being is self-knowledge of
being.*

Intuition of reality is self-realization.

We can *know what* an experience is or *know that* an experience is such and such only in relation to other experiences. Experiences seem real only because real

awareness illuminates them. But experiences are not real; they are illusory and ephemeral.

We cannot experience intuition because experience cannot represent intuition. Awareness is real; intuition is awareness that is self-aware of its absolute reality.

Intuition exposes the unreal world of experience and lays it bare, a mere shadow on a wall, an illusion, a fantasy, like a magic trick or a captivating performance.

Many people imagine intuition to be mysterious, but it is not; intuition is always here, patiently waiting until distraction subsides.

*We imagine that we know some things
about experience.*

We intuit reality.

When we understand what awareness is, we also understand what being is and what reality is.

*Seek awareness of reality and being.
You are awareness itself.*

Ontological Monadology

Here is a puzzle based on the first few parts of Leibniz's *Monadology*. This puzzle refers to beings (as in ontology), whereas Leibniz referred to monads (as in simple individuals).

The statements below define a basic framework for the puzzle. Think of it as a possible world-view. For a moment, try to envision your world according to this framework. Imagine you are one of these individual beings among all the others.

Here is the framework:

- Imagine that the universe contains individual beings who are aware and perceptive.
- Each being is infinitely small, and the universe is completely filled with them.
- Beings have no constituent parts or components, and yet no two are identical.
- Beings differ according to their perceptions—their feelings, memories, ideas, and so forth.
- Some perceive place in order to organize perceptions that occur together.
- Some perceive time in order to organize perceptions that do not occur together.
- Some perceive number in order to organize perceptions by sequence or quantity.
- Some perceive ignorance in order to organize perceptions into loosely-related collections.

Further considerations:

- ✓ Ignorance refers to the ability to completely ignore some perceptions and to significantly compartmentalize perceptions by ignoring relationships among them.
- ✓ A being may have a wide variety of perceptions, such as insights, expectations, sensations, desires, representations, dreams, fantasies, and so forth that are not specifically mentioned in the basic framework.
- ✓ Each being is capable of very complex perceptions and very complex collections of perceptions, including such things as perceptions of other perceptions.
- ✓ Some beings may perceive confusion, even to the point of overwhelming disorientation or being unconscious of most of their perceptions.

How do you know where one being ends and another begins?

How many beings are there, really?

What is the universe of all these beings, and where does it exist? (The simplest and most obvious answer.)

How does this relate to knowing and intuiting?

How does this relate to the previous stories?

Remember ***Being Dreams Forgetting***.

14 - TRUE AND FALSE

TRUE: “True” refers to agreement, and it has two common uses: casual and formal. Casual agreement refers to commonly understood language and evidence. Strict or formal agreement refers to the rules of formally defined (usually symbolic) languages, such as Logic or Arithmetic.

FALSE: “False” refers to disagreement in the same way that “True” refers to agreement. Disagreement means that the phrase or idea in question contradicts (conflicts with, is contrary to) the expectations of common language, the relevant evidence, or the rules of a formal language.

In casual language there are two distinct meanings of True. The more common meaning is when True is applied to statements such as “The apple is red.” The less common meaning is when “True” appears within statements, such as “The arrow flew true to its target” or “The arrow is true,” where True is applied not to statements but components of statements, such as nouns and verbs.

Consider these two statements: the ordinary sentence, “Two and two are four,” and the symbolic sentence, “ $2+2=4$ ”. The ordinary form, which is sometimes used sarcastically to drive home a point, is said to be True when it is appropriate to and agrees with a particular context. The symbolic form is said to be True only if it agrees with the rules of Arithmetic.

It is often difficult to discern the meaning of truth in casual usage because each person uses the term in a different way, and there is no universally accepted definition of truth except in the most general terms.

It is easy to define the meaning of True in a formal language: the meaning is explicitly written into the rules of the language. One simply writes down a few sentences in the symbols of the language and declares these sentences to be True. These sentences are called axioms. There are also rules of inference that in a similar manner define valid ways of reasoning. Within each formal language, axioms define the meaning of “True” with the intent that the meaning not depend upon the circumstances in which the language will be used. Of course, it is helpful if the axioms at least appear to agree with casual truth, but this is not strictly necessary.

In casual language we appeal to a wide context for evaluating proposed truths. In formal language we appeal mainly to a few formal statements (axioms and rules of inference) that define truth by decree. In formal reasoning, truth is rigidly defined. In casual reasoning we might say a statement is True if it corresponds to other relevant statements and to the relevant facts of the matter; but it can be difficult to know which other statements or facts are relevant for all parties at any particular moment.

*What can truth refer to other than
agreement or correspondence?*

From where does the original idea of truth arise?

What was its purpose?

Reality defines truth as reality itself.

Being defines truth as self-knowledge of being.

Awareness defines truth as the certainty of awareness.

Experience is true (real) only in the sense that experiences arise and subside within real awareness; but no experience has any reality or truth of its own.

Existing things are true (real) only in the sense that existing things truly seem to arise, persist, and subside within real being; but no existing thing has any being of its own.

Unreality is true (real) only in the sense that there is unreality within reality; but unreality is not what it appears to be, apart from the truth that it really does appear to be unreal.

How do people agree on what is true and what is not true?

How do people discover what is true and what is not true?

Where Is Here (revisited 3)

If you haven't yet solved this difficult puzzle, or even if you have, you might take into consideration the two meanings of truth.

Don't you want to know what's true? What good is a doubtful answer if you take the puzzle seriously? So far, you have read and thought about reality, being, and awareness; and perhaps you have also learned something about how containers work.

The next six topics expand upon the idea of two kinds of truth.

Before you turn to these topics, consider carefully how you react to each of these ideas as you read them; read them slowly, keeping in mind the idea that reality, being, and awareness are all the same thing.

Knowing

Valuing

Casual

Universal

Contextual

Relative

This small paradox sums up a major theme in these next topics. Perhaps it will be useful for the puzzling question, “Where is here?”

A True Paradox—

*“If we really know something, we should
be able to explain it.”*

But, ...

*“We cannot explain what we truly know,
and we do not quite believe what we
think we can explain.”*

What do you know but can’t explain?

15 - KNOWING-WHAT AND KNOWING-THAT

KNOWING-WHAT: “Knowing-what” refers to direct awareness (or intuition) of reality. It may also refer to clear awareness of particular experiences such as awareness of ideas, words, symbols, representations, judgements, habitual attachments, trees, and so forth. Knowing-what encompasses knowing-that.

KNOWING-THAT: “Knowing-that” refers to the experience of indirectly referring to or representing something by using ideas, words, symbols, representations, judgements, and so forth. Knowing-that refers to statements, questions, meaningful exclamations, recollections, memories, and so forth. Knowing-that cannot encompass knowing-what.

Knowing-what contains knowing-that because the root of all knowing lies in being and awareness, which knows what awareness is and knows what experience is within awareness. We *know what* words are, and we *know that* a certain word means such and such. Problems arise when we confuse knowing-what and knowing-that, and we falsely believe either that awareness

itself can be verified or falsified, or that things represented in statements can be directly known through the representation.

In knowing-what, the overriding context is awareness. We are directly aware of something, whatever it may seem to be, and that is the truth of the matter.

But in knowing-that, the possibility of verification or falsification is essential. There is no guarantee that any statement is always true. Even $2+2=4$ is not true (or is not meaningful) in some useful contexts. Every statement must be verified by appeal to reasoning (strictly so in the case of Logic), by agreement with other relevant statements, or by appeal to the relevant facts of the matter as indicated by the statement.

The interpretation and verification of any knowing-that statement or representation depends upon many contexts, each of which is relevant to some degree. There can be enormous complexity and contradiction among these different contexts, with each having its own understanding of truth and meaning. The problem of verifying the truth of any statement depends on how the statement is recognized and assessed in these contexts.

Relative Truth: The truth of representation is meaningful only in relation to context and only in relation to other representations.

Absolute Truth: The truth of awareness is the same as awareness itself, and this cannot be represented or falsified.

We know what reality is, what being is, and what awareness is. Knowing-what is truth without representation or relativity, even though it allows representation and relativity. For example, knowing-what allows representation and relativity in texts such as here in this book just as reality allows unreality and just as being allows the illusion of individual things.

To some extent, you must *know what* the words and statements in this sentence mean for you, or the text would be unintelligible.

The heart of this distinction between two forms of knowing is that knowing-what is the character of awareness, while knowing-that is the character of experience as represented in statements, symbols, gestures, ideas, and such.

Knowing-what is exactly what it seems to be.

Knowing-that is not what it seems to be, except it seems to be knowing-that.

Knowing-that cannot represent knowing-what through ideas, words, statements, and so forth, all of which are indirect, relativistic, and unreal.

But we do *know what* knowing-that is.

The Robin

Fred grew up in a wonderful garden where wonderful keepers kept everything proper and nice: plants and animals, the bugs and the fish, the sky and the soil, and the ponds and the streams.

One day Fred saw a bird—a Robin—fall from a tree, too young to know how to fly.

He picked up the bird from where it fell and carefully helped it to fold in its wings; when he held it aloft it clung to his hand not knowing what it should do.

So, Fred took the bird home with him—carefully indeed—and gave it a box tricked out like a nest to make it feel sound and safe; and for a week he fed it whatever it wanted and kept clean its new little home.

Robin grew strong with plenty of energy seemingly eager to go, so Fred took it up in his hand and took it outside to the sky. But Robin clutched tight to Fred's hand when he wheeled his arm toward the trees where surely enough it spread out its wings to catch a gust of

the breeze. But carefully, cautiously, it wouldn't yet fly and clung to that comforting hand.

The next day, they went again to the sky where Fred held it aloft. Timidly, nervously, it flapped as before and seemed shocked that it lifted away. "Ooh," it must surely have thought, such a scary moment aloft! Not knowing what else it could do it held its wings still and balanced its flight to glide gently to the soft green grasses scarcely far away. And there it lay, pondering the meaning of the way. Fred gently took Robin up in his hand and then back to the safety of home.

And then on the next day, when Fred took Robin to the place with the tree, Robin jumped from the hand and flew away, wheeling and darting and landing expertly in that tree. Then up again it went, and soon it was gone from sight. Fred sighed, "I am here if you need me."

*You know what words mean when you
read them, when "This" means that and
"That" means this.*

*You know the phrases, sentences, and
paragraphs, or else you can't read
anything at all.*

*But of what does this remind you
beyond the literal sense?*

*To what in this world of your own
private life does any of this refer?*

Then, in the second year since Robin was here, it was a lovely day in the morning when Fred was about and enjoying the fragrant grass beneath the trees, when all at once a furious noise came down to his ears from a bird on a branch above. "Robin!" cried Fred to the lovely bird hopping to and fro, up a limb and down again, and

back and forth, and up and down again. And there above was a neat round nest.

Fred climbed up slowly, oh so timidly, slowly a limb at a time so not to frighten or upset his old friend. But clearly, he was welcomed right up the nest, eyes only inches away from its edge; and there within were four tiny birds with necks stretched thin and beaks open wide, ready for mom to fill.

At arm's length away, Robin hopped quite excitedly on the limb, this way and that, side to side, quietly watching, gently observing, looking deeply at Fred's face, then at her nest, then at Fred again. And Fred looked at Robin, and they shared each other's delight.

Then, in the fifth year since that day of the nest, late in the middle of night, Fred was dreaming unhappy dreams of the puzzles and struggles of life. Such stress were these days, that he could hardly sleep enough to meet the next day. Too much had he noticed the violent nature of things—life, death, old age, and disease—that he had a fearful dream of all the things that happen to people that it seems should not be so and then the good things that should happen but simply don't.

But then in the dream was this magical sound, like chimes and pipes and flutes of all kinds, so thick and rich and complex; and yet in the same, so harmonized among what seemed hundreds of melodies, short and crisp, all perfectly blended in one, like a vision of hundreds of Starlings turning and wheeling, diving and rising, all moving as one in one shared purpose, as though each wing and each flutter made its own tune, its own unique sound.

Fred listened and thought to himself, dreaming in the dream, "so, this is the music of the spheres, infinite, harmonic, so difficult to hear, to discern from the chatter, as peaceful as it is, so deep in variety."

And Fred listened; and all his cares went away; and he was for that time at peace with the world, delighted,

awakened to possibilities he could scarcely have imagined.

Then, slowly, Fred began to awaken from deepest sleep to a lucid awareness of what he now so clearly perceived.

Dawn was here. The light was just beginning as he opened his eyes to the new day, and still the divine music possessed him.

His thoughts awakened: "What is this celestial sound?"

He moved his sleepy head just a bit from side to side, when so quickly the answer was clear.

Birds in the dawn were singing to the morning light, chirping and calling among themselves, each in a different voice with its own sensations, always a related variation, learning and repeating each other.

It was a single message to the new day in how many voices for how many ears among how many lives?

Fred rose quickly from his bed and strode to the door. Slowly, he opened it and peaked outside.

The short green grasses and the low tree branches were thick with Robins.

Fred listened. He watched this bustling round of red breasted birds. He stood for a moment, then quietly stepped outside from his door.

The Robins sang on as Fred walked very carefully, respectfully into their midst. They parted a little to give a place to enter, and each one turned to look at him. And their music went on and on in its elaboration.

Fred could see quite well from the scene that they recognized him and knew who he was to them. So, Fred wondered at this scene, remembering the bird he had once held in his hand.

"This music, every morning of every day! Do they truly recognize me? Could the Robin I knew have taught them to remember me from so long ago? Is that, too, in the music, this song of their clan?"

Discern within yourself the clear difference between knowing-that, which is always expressed in words and sentences, and knowing-what, which is always inexpressible. In order to follow any story, you read the words to *know that* something happens, but you must add something else to *know what* the experience means.

With that in mind, visualize an answer to each of the following questions. Try not answer in words; or if you must include some words, then do so with only one or two nouns. The task is to visualize, not describe, represent, or refer-to.

Of what did the story remind you that was not stated in the story itself?

Have you ever held a bird in your hand?

What was the young bird thinking? Do birds think?

What was it like for the bird when it first glided to the ground safely in control of its flight?

Why did Robin call Fred to its nest?

What does the Music of the Spheres (Celestial Music) sound like?

Each morning of the spring and fall, Robins gather at dawn in the heart of their territory to sing different versions of a shared song; when the sun peaks above the horizon, they stop singing and go on about their day.

Why do they do this?

What do they say?

16 - VALUE AND JUDGEMENT

VALUE: “Value” refers to the importance of something as directly known from some point of view, such as the importance of fresh water to someone who is thirsty. Value is direct awareness of a certain experience or circumstance. Every experience has some value. Value is not the same as valuation; value can be directly known, while valuation is indirectly judged.

JUDGEMENT: “Judgement,” in relation to value, refers to indirect assessment of the relative worth of something, or at least assessment of an idea of that worth. Judgment falsely represents or refers to value, awareness of value, an idea of value, and so forth. Judgement can be overt, as when we pronounce judgment in words or gestures, or it can be subtle and virtually unconscious. Valuation is a form of judgement, either in simple terms of relative worth or in more complex terms such as barter or a medium of exchange

Philosophers sometimes discuss extrinsic value and intrinsic value. Extrinsic value is the value of things in relation to one another, typically experienced as degrees of desirability where desire arises from discriminating

between good and evil, better and worse, and so forth. Extrinsic value is illusion. Recognition of extrinsic value coupled with related desires and aversions is the basis of all judgement.

On the other hand, something has intrinsic value if it is valuable in and of itself irrespective of its relationship to other things. Reality is intrinsically valuable, and reality is absolutely good. Being and awareness are also intrinsically valuable, and being and awareness are absolutely good.

Because reality is intrinsically valuable and absolutely good, evil cannot be real. The idea of evil arises from habitual judgement, and all suffering arises from judgement.

In reality, all judgement is illusion.

To say to yourself “the water tastes good” detracts from the taste of the water by shifting attention from the taste to a statement about the taste. Judgement is like trying to refer to or re-present in words an aspect of some particular experience—it could be an attempt to preserve something of that experience until later. For example, an energetic statement such as “This concert was wonderful” expresses a value-judgement of the experience, but it actually says very little about that experience. The same holds true for negative valuations such as “The food tastes awful.”

Habitual judgement (or habitual attachment) distracts from the simple awareness of things. It distracts from the experiences that are being judged—even from the memories of them—and it distracts from other experiences as well, as it focuses attention more on the judgement than on other interesting things. It shifts the focus from direct awareness of things to an indirect ex-

perience of a judgement. Although it seems like judgements must have some value, judgement narrowly focuses attention on words and gestures.

*Awareness and intuition are always
allowing and peaceful.*

*All judgement is indirect and falsely
representational.*

What is it like to value the memory of a fine sunrise? “Memory of” refers to an indirect, representational experience. But the memory of an experience—remembering, representing, referring to, and such—is not the same as the original awareness of that experience. It is useful and valuable to remember things, but remembering comes at the price of distraction from simple, direct awareness of being. Judging the value of memories and past judgements is only needless second-guessing.

Reality, being, and awareness are easily ignored when you focus your attention on a memory or a judgement.

Judgements are habitual words and gestures without intrinsic value. Awareness and intuition are not judgmental. Expand your attention until it is awareness without judgement.

Reverse the process of focusing on judgement. Notice your awareness of things. When judgement arises, notice awareness.

Do not judge the value of intuition.

*Set aside judgement the way a child
would set aside a toy that is no longer
interesting.*

Ocean Of Light

For reasons that Hana did not understand, sometimes her father was cruel and irrational. He never hit or physically abused Hana or any other member of the family, but from the earliest time Hana could remember, he was always angry at her. Sometimes he even threatened to just kill her and throw her body in the street if she didn't behave better in his house. Hana could not understand why her father talked to her that way, and it hurt her that he said those things. Her mother told her that he really didn't mean it like that and he just said those things because he loved her and cared about her so much. Of course, this made no sense to Hana, but she had no other place to live and no one else to ask about such troubling things. Naturally, Hana became curious about the whole idea of dying and what it meant.

Later in life, after Hana had graduated from school and moved away from home, she began to wonder more about death and dying. Like everyone else, Hana believed that one day she would surely die; but she could not understand why she seemed to take it so casually, as if it were just another thing. It seemed strange that she couldn't reconcile her belief that she would die, with her awareness that she took this so lightly. So, she decided to find out how it was possible that she could know she would die and still behave every day as though it just didn't matter.

So, Hana did something very unusual. She tried to imagine what it would be like to really know she was going to die someday. Of course, she did not want to die or harm herself, not even pretend to do so. She only wanted to confront what she couldn't understand. She needed to solve a problem in the way she thought about her life. This was not easy; it took Hana more than ten

years to get an answer to her question, even though she worked very hard at it.

Hana had some unusual experiences trying to imagine what it might be like to really know she was going to die. One night she had a dream where she was running down a long hallway that ended at a wall with a single door in it; she flung open the door and ran straight through only to discover she had run out the side of a tall building and was now falling toward the street below, when suddenly she woke up in a fright. So, she taught herself to dream the same dream again and stay dreaming it until she could see what happened next—after all, it was only a dream. She could never get to the end of it. She would always wake up just before hitting the ground, or the dream of falling would just change into some other dream.

After more than a decade of trying to imagine what it would be like to know she was going to die, one day Hana was sitting on a hill overlooking the peaceful ocean. She was so tired of trying to understand. She could hardly think at all right then. She was so tired of the constant struggle that, for a moment, she completely gave up. Silently, she said to herself “It’s been so long since I just looked around.”

And then she understood. Everything she had ever thought or known was gone from her mind as she looked at the world. Everything was gone except for just seeing. In that moment there was an ocean of light made of colors and sounds and all other sensations with no thought at all about names or about what was what. For a few seconds Hana thought nothing at all, recognized nothing in particular, and just understood everything altogether as one.

After those few seconds a thought returned to her: “Now I remember; I’ve always known.”

What Hana remembered when her thoughts returned was that this moment, this clear awareness, had returned to her just as it always had before, more times than can ever be counted. Each time, again and again, always to remember, "I am this."

What does this story have to do with value and judgement?

How did Hana value her family?

Does life have any intrinsic value, or is its value only relative?

What in your life is the most valuable thing of all?

What is absolutely the most valuable thing you can imagine?

After seeing the ocean of light, what did Hana remember when thoughts returned?

In what way did she remember this? Was it just an idea, or was it something else?

Compare this to ***The Seer and the Seen***.

How did Hana answer her question about dying?

17 - CASUAL TRUTH AND CASUAL CONTEXT

CASUAL TRUTH: “Casual Truth” refers to truth that is informal, conditional, and temporary. Casual truth has different meanings depending upon the different contexts in which it is defined, asserted, or evaluated. These contexts may disagree on what truth means.

CASUAL CONTEXT: “Casual Context,” in regard to casual truth, refers both to the informal contexts in which something is experienced or asserted and to all other contexts in which that thing can be understood, referenced, or examined.

Context is a type of container within which something appears and has meaning. There are many different kinds of context, and multiple competing or conflicting contexts may appear together for any particular thing. Some common contexts are languages, paragraphs, expectations, situations, intentions, ideas, beliefs, patterns, memories, habits, cultures, worlds, and so forth.

Logic is not normally referred to as casual. But from a broader perspective, Logic is casual in the sense that

Logical truth has no Logical justification outside of itself. Logic is widely used in many different contexts, but Logical truth is casual when used (or even just referred to) outside of the Theory of Logic and related theories such as Arithmetic.

Logic has no reality of its own.

Logical truth has no reality of its own.

Logic is not inherently True, nor does it represent any universal law. It is only a language (or a part of a language), and it is a highly artificial language.

The Theory of Logic explicitly defines truth in its own peculiar way by assigning to selected statements the value-word, "True." We cannot infer from Logic that Logical truth itself is necessarily True in any other contexts, even though other contexts may adopt all or part of Logic in their understanding of truth.

So, Logic is a formal language that has somehow arisen from, and is typically used in, informal conversations, even though Logic itself is highly artificial and formal.

Logic is extremely useful. But to insist that Logical truth is universal or absolute is to confuse two kinds of truth:

- Relative (contextual or casual) truth applies to statements, but it does not apply to reality. Relative truth is used to evaluate the truth of statements. Logic can be useful when untangling the complexities of experience, but it is not useful for evaluating absolute truth.
- Absolute (universal) truth refers to reality, being, and awareness. Absolute truth encompasses (allows) relative truth, but it is not useful for evaluating the relative truth of statements.

Structurally, Logic is formal and representational. Practically, Logic is informal, casual, and representational. Its meaning comes from its usefulness in contexts that lie outside of the Theory of Logic and not from intuition of any ultimate truth about or within Logic.

Different meanings of truth arise from different contexts where Logic might be used. These contexts appear in degrees of complexity from elementary reasoning to very complex informal conversations that may or may not in themselves be particularly logical.

Here is an example from practical Logic:

The statement, “**If X is better than Y, and Y is better than Z, then X must be better than Z,**” is typically held to be Logically True.

But in many circumstances people believe “**X is better than Y, Y is better than Z, and Z is better than X,**” which is typically held to be Logically False.

You should be able to find examples of these in your own life, particularly in regard to beliefs, preferences, habits, sports, and so forth.

This does not mean these casual beliefs really are false; it just means that Logic can become difficult in complex situations.

Practical reasoning among people mostly seems informal and casual rather than formal and strictly Logical. Regardless of how Logical reasoning is used, Logic has only casual grounding and informal justification, just like everything else we might agree on. We value Logic because it is useful and practical, not because it is absolutely True.

If the Theory of Logic were absolutely or universally True, that truth would be plainly obvious to absolutely everyone who noticed it.

Self-Sacrifice

Very old stories tell us that once, a long time ago, there was a place called Kurukshetra that was a vast and level plain upon the earth. The old stories also tell us that Kurukshetra, the earth where it had formed, and even the whole universe were ruled over by a very large number of individual gods. There were tens of thousands of these gods at the very least. They each had different responsibilities for how the universe was working. Being a god back then was a temporary thing—all of these gods knew they were mortal beings, even though they also knew that they might live a very long time.

One day all of these gods got together at Kurukshetra to enjoy a little contest among themselves. They decided to see who could perform the best sacrifice. Back then, “sacrifice” meant something different from what it does today. It meant ‘returning something that was borrowed.’ For example, if a farmer borrowed some grain, planted it, and enjoyed a good harvest, he might feel the need to sacrifice some of his harvest by returning it. Maybe he would return it to the soil or to the person or god from whom he borrowed it. It was always considered good practice to sacrifice more than had been borrowed.

So, these gods decided they would each perform their best sacrifice and then they would vote on whose sacrifice was the best. Vishnu won the contest. Vishnu’s responsibility was to ensure that the universe and everything in it are all justly sustained from the time they are created until the time they are destroyed and recycled at the ends of their natural lives. There were two other important gods to remember: Brahma and Shiva. Brahma was the creator of the universe and all that was in it, while Shiva was the destroyer of the universe and

the destroyer or recycler of all the things that were ever in the universe.

Here is how Vishnu won the contest. He sat down among all the other gods and set himself on fire, and very soon he was completely engulfed in flames. Vishnu, the sustainer of the universe and all that is in it, sacrificed himself in his fire. He returned himself to the universe that he sustains and from which he had arisen.

What makes this story interesting today is that, according to tradition, Vishnu's sacrificial fire has not yet gone out. After all, if it already had gone out, either Vishnu would have ended his sacrifice prematurely or he would have been completely consumed by the fire once and for all and completely returned or recycled to wherever he came from. If he was completely consumed, he could no longer sustain this universe and all that is in it; then Shiva would have to recycle everything, and Brahma would have to create everything again, provided that Shiva and Brahma were still around to do that. But here we are today: Vishnu keeps on burning.

What does this story have to do with casual context?

Why can't we see Vishnu's fire today? After all, all the other gods saw him in the fire.

What is Vishnu returning with this sacrifice?

To what source or universe is Vishnu returning this?

How can self-immolation actually return anything?

Why isn't Vishnu destroyed by the fire?

How does Vishnu continue to sustain the universe while he burns in this fire?

What kind of fire is this? Are we looking at it today?

Why was Vishnu so calm?

There is a sentiment among some people, mainly those who follow The Path of the Elders or, as others describe it, The Path of One Thus Come. It is something like this:

*Burning, burning! This world is burning.
It burns with the fire of desire.*

Does this help us understand Vishnu's fiery sacrifice?

What does this have to do with Logical reasoning?

What does Kurukshetra represent?

18 - UNIVERSAL TRUTH AND UNIVERSAL CONTEXT

UNIVERSAL TRUTH: “Universal Truth” refers to reality. Therefore, knowledge of universal truth refers to directly knowing what reality is; it cannot refer to indirectly knowing that reality is such and such. Therefore, knowledge of universal truth also refers to knowing what being is, knowing what awareness is, knowing what self-awareness is, and knowing what knowledge is.

UNIVERSAL CONTEXT: “Universal Context” also refers only to reality, being, and awareness. Reality is the ultimate context of everything. Therefore, knowing universal truth is the same as knowing the universal context. Universal truth is the same as universal context: universal truth is its own context, and universal context is its own truth. To directly know one, is to directly know the other.

We directly know reality; direct knowledge of reality is always present because reality is always present. But it is impossible to indirectly *know that* reality is this or that.

Still, we often use the form, “know that,” to refer to what we presume or assert to be universal truth. For example, in casual conversation we might say, “I know that universal truth refers to reality” (as suggested above in this text) or “I know that universal context is all-encompassing.”

But in saying such things we lapse into indirect representation in the form of statements, or the equivalent of statements, while universal truth cannot be captured in statements.

*To know universal truth, you must
directly know reality.*

*To directly know reality, you must be
reality itself.*

*Universal truth is reality, reality is being,
and being is aware of itself.*

Universal truth cannot be expressed in statements; it can only be known directly. It is self-knowledge.

In casual contexts we sometimes make statements that refer to an idea of universal truth—like many of the statements in this text—statements that can only refer to casual (imaginary) ideas about universal truth. The awareness of such a statement cannot convey any awareness of universal truth, even though it may incidentally trigger an intuition of universal truth.

A statement can pretend to express something about anything. Depending upon the context wherein a statement appears, it may trigger intuition of universal truth or universal context, but being truly aware of universal truth at that moment is not the same as whatever the triggering statement stated. Universal truth cannot be represented in statements, but you can intuit it.

*It is impossible to describe universal
truth.*

Anyone who has for a moment been self-aware of reality knows that the experience is inexpressible. It is inexpressible because it is not an experience at all; it is simply the innate knowledge of this self-aware reality that is the context of everything.

Statements and judgements do not apply to the universal context. They apply only to experiences, ideas, other statements, judgements, and things like that.

Not these words. Not this book.

No words at all. None.

A reflection of the moon as seen in a stream is not the moon. Words do not convey awareness. Nonetheless, words, even the absence of words, might bring comfort and encouragement to some and might unexpectedly lead to significant intuition of reality and being.

Memory of Being Born

A young man explains what he remembers of a time.

“I” is such an easy word to use. I can’t remember how I first learned it.

When I was born, I knew no words at all. So, please be patient with my words today.

The earliest feeling that I recall arose in the middle of me below the heart and above the stomach. It felt like it did not belong in me. I was doing OK, then this feeling, like a hollowing-out that filled up with terrible upset, lingering and lingering before going away. Twenty-five years later I matched this unnamed memory to a particular childhood event. When I was nine years old and I was playing in a ball game on grassy field, I made a big mistake. I stood in the wrong place where another child, a big bully, ran straight into me. I saw the smirk on his face when he hit me and laid me out painfully on the ground. It wasn’t the hit that I matched to the feeling in the womb; it was deep humiliation at my failure in front

of the other boys on the team and the adults who were watching that day. As I lay on the ground, I noticed the sky was colored orange. Today, I think the earlier bad feeling that I had was from my mother when she had a bad experience of her own and she passed that feeling to me inside of her. After I was born, I kind of saw it in her a few times when I saw her red face and tears over something that happened. But it took time to add up these different memories.

Later in the womb, I noticed red-orange colors hovering in my mind. Not the sickness I had felt before, just the color of light seen through her. It felt nice. Reds and oranges.

But one day I started to feel bad with nausea and stomach pains inside me. It got worse, then even worse again. Maybe it eased a little now and then, but it grew and grew until it was thick brown misery and sickness all through, sick to the point it hurt a lot. I had no grasp of what it was or how it could be, or if it would ever go away. Yet, when I think of it today, I think it was the message that I had to leave that place; and then it was the crushing and twisting of me as I was pushed out. It was so terrible, so completely unknown and unexpected. It overwhelmed me. I reached the point when I could not stand it any longer and I gave up. Just gave up. Just set my whole self aside with no hope at all; and of those hours or even days until I was finally delivered, I have no memory now that I can find.

Then it was over. It was calm. Then an explosion all though me of brilliant pins and needles piercing every part of me with a prickling light as I drew my first breath and the air lit me up completely!

The first awareness on that breath was a shocking ecstasy of sparkling light and streaming energy; I could not tell these things apart. If I cried at that moment, as babies will, it was a cry of release. I realized immediately that through all that had happened to me from the beginning—if there ever was a beginning—I was only in

the middle of it all. I had never changed. Nothing changed me at all; nothing about me could change. I saw I was the place where this happened and I was none of the things that happened, and whatever happens now could never harm this place. Nothing had really happened for or against me, it just happened all around and inside of me, and I was there with it all. Nothing could ever change this certainty. No experience, no matter the power of it, could ever do me harm.

It is too simple, too obvious, too close to me to put into words. Every word I write about this always means something else, never what I know and what I remember. I can't write it the way it was.

Given that he knew no words at all at the time he was born, what did he remember in that moment?

What was the form of that memory?

How did he acquire that memory?

When did he acquire it?

How is this related to universal context?

How can anything so subtle and difficult to explain be so significant?

19 - THING AND CONTEXT

THING: “Thing” refers to whatever can be experienced, referred to, considered, or even imagined. There is virtually no limit on what the word might refer to.

CONTEXT: “Context” refers to the interrelations among words, ideas, predispositions, conventions, circumstances, memories, habits, environments, and other things as they relate to something being experienced, referred to, and so forth. Reality is the universal context. Your world is a context within the universal. Today is context. Your thoughts right now are context.

Experiences are complex. An experience might be characterized as having five significant aspects:

1. Universal context.
2. Awareness.
3. Attention or interest that is focused on something.
4. Less attention to or interest in the immediate circumstances.
5. Inattention and disinterest in regard to other irrelevant or distracting circumstances.

The difference between the thing being experienced and the contexts in which that thing is experienced is a difference in attention and interest. When I am aware of seeing the tree, my attention is focused more on the tree than on other details of the experience; but I am more aware of these other details than I am of the great mass of distant or uninteresting possibilities. Seeing-the-tree is the thing being experienced, while everything else is context. It is a matter of how and to what degree attention and interest are focused.

All things exist only in relation to other things.

In severely traumatic situations attention may become so narrowly focused that it excludes all but the most demanding features. During a trauma event it is difficult for people to think about what is happening; then afterward they have great difficulty recalling many critical details of that experience.

In normal circumstances how does the focusing of your attention determine what you experience and what you remember of it later?

How does this focus change?

How narrow is your focus right now?

How wide is the relevant context of this experience?

What are you ignoring?

You might experience a particular shape as a table, then as pieces of wood, then as colors and shapes, and then as ideas and memories. You might become fixated on an amazing performance.

This text is abstract. Take time to stop thinking about words. Instead, just notice what the words suggest to you as you read them. The real meaning is not present in the words.

Here is a small puzzle related to context. Notice how your focus of attention changes while you consider it.

Nothing is not a thing. Nothing cannot exist. The words, "it is nothing," do not say there is a thing called nothing. So, what were you before you were born?

Reality is the universal context. Even in the most demanding or traumatic experiences, there is context within context within context in all possible dimensions of experience.

We are nearly always focused on experiencing something, on minimizing attention to peripheral content, and on ignoring content that is irrelevant to our immediate interest.

Can you expand your attention all the way out to the universal context?

Can you reduce your attention to virtually nothing, so that the universal context is completely evident?

The Rain

Look around you. Survey your world. This world that you experience appears only to you and to no other. Your world arose with you in time, only in you, and it will soon be gone forever. What is this world? Of what is it made? From where did it come?

Have you heard of the rain that falls from everywhere at once, that falls equally upon every atom of every world? It falls down from the sky and up from the earth. It falls sideways East to West and West to East simultaneously; North to South and South to North; from all directions everywhere, all at once.

You see the color of the rain as it falls upon your eyes, upon your thoughts, and upon your very being. You taste the flavor of the rain as it falls into your mouth and upon your tongue. You hear the sound of the rain

as it falls upon your ears, even as the words and the meanings of words that you hear and use. You feel the rain upon your skin, falling from everywhere; you feel the rain falling outward from the core of you and into your awareness. You smell the rain all around and within you, its fragrance reminding you of your being, knitting all these moments together into this reality.

The rain emerges from in between the atoms and particles, from smaller than the smallest, not favoring any origin over any other. It arises from beyond the farthest limits of all possible worlds.

The rain is one rain in all its forms, arising from one source, raining down equally upon one awareness; and every infinitesimal droplet is unique across the whole universe.

The rain nourishes your will to be, to know, to participate, to do good things, to benefit others, to overcome suffering, to reduce fear and misery, to expand awareness ever further into all possibilities of when and where.

The rain nourishes your will to rise up from plain desires, to transcend hardships and injuries, to reach toward the meaning of the rain itself just as all plants and animals strive toward that same source of all experience.

The rain falls right here this very moment.

And to what end does this rain fall on you?

*To fulfill you,
move you,
remind you.*

Notice the rain.

*Aware of these words,
just being here,
realizing.*

With no more words.

20 - RELATIVE TRUTH AND RELATIVE CONTEXT

RELATIVE TRUTH: “Relative Truth” refers to partial, casual, or conditional agreement. It refers to truth that is relatively true, relativistic, conditional, or qualified in some essential way. Relative truth is like saying, “mostly true,” “true in the sense of,” or “only true if or when.” It may be something that is true in one context but false in another related context, true or false only to some degree, or true depending upon something else; or it may be meaningful only in particular relevant circumstances such as being true in theory but not true in practice.

RELATIVE CONTEXT: “Relative Context” refers to many interrelated contexts that appear together as a single context for something, where each component context (or sub-context) affects the meaning and truth of that something. For example, in this book the suggested meanings of some words change from chapter to chapter—from context to context.

Relative context is often inconsistent, meaning that the sub-contexts may contradict each other in significant ways. For example, it is rare—even suspicious—for many eye-witnesses to each describe the same event without contradicting one another. Or it is like a group of scientists who each meticulously replicates a well-known test or experiment, with each getting somewhat different results. How do we know what to believe in these situations? The different results are relatively true in relation to the different contexts and different circumstances.

In scientific experiments these discrepancies are often dismissed under the fictitious reasoning of *ceteris parabus*, which translates as “all other things being equal.” Unfortunately, all other things are never equal, because each individual context or thing is unique across the universe. Without that clause science would be vastly more complex and more difficult than it already is; but with that clause science is a lot less truthful than it pretends to be and a lot less accurate.

The meaning of a context comes from how it defines truth, how it is related to other contexts, and how other contexts define truth in relation to that context. Contexts can exist for anything, and any particular thing is a context for many other things.

Relative context refers to everything that gives meaning to what is being considered; it is everything that supports in any way the existence and appearance of that thing.

And what is relative truth? By example, the idea that you live an individual life seems true to the extent that it agrees or disagrees with other ideas and experiences. The general idea of individuality appears true given the degree of general agreement with other, similar appearances. At the same time, the idea is very complex; it arises from a great many interrelated contexts, experiences, and other ideas that do not always agree with

each other. In other words, the idea of individuality appears to be only relatively true.

Individuality is only an idea that somewhat agrees with other ideas, preferences, judgements, and habits. But it is not universal truth, which is clearly true and clearly applies to everything. Consider the way your life depends upon and is entangled with so many other things in your world:

How certain are you of your individuality?

Is individuality a matter of degree or gradation, or is it some fixed yes-or-no quality?

How confident are you that you know what 'individual' really means?

Is it only somewhat true that you are an individual?

Are you only more or less individual?

What is individual about you?

What is not individual about you?

Universal truth is reality. Relative truth is unreality. Universal truth allows relative truth, which appears within the universal context as only partial and limited agreement among things. These partial and limited truths are the worlds, moments, ideas, preferences, and other things that we experience. Relative truth is how things exist within being: relatively so, as this or that, depending upon context.

Universal context is the context of everything, but relative context is limited in scope and intentionally selective. It appears within the universe as the universe dividing itself into countless worlds, world-views, lives, moments, and other experiences. Relative context (relativity) is the structure of unreality. Limited relative context is the same as not really knowing.

All ideas about truth, no matter how precise and logical they may seem, arise in relation to an infinite complexity of meaning and interpretation.

Truth appears to be a simple idea, but relative truth is not at all simple because of the complexity and misunderstanding within which it appears.

Reality is absolute and genuine.

Unreality is relativity and illusion.

The Mystery of the Ordinary

An old man ponders his search for truth.

When I was very young, I wanted to learn about everything; I wanted to participate and to contribute what I could. Everything was interesting, so exciting. I was promised I could be whatever I wanted to be and do whatever I wanted to do, within reason of course.

I was misled.

I learned soon enough that I could contribute something but just not what others demanded from me.

I was told the world is wonderful, and it is; but it is also deep in suffering and misery.

I listened to my first teachers who told me I was not working hard enough or maybe I was just no good.

I was told I was wrong when I spoke the truth, and I was praised when I repeated what I did not believe.

I wondered, where is real truth? Where is honesty?

Is it in science, history, folklore, philosophy? Is it in art?

Is it in education, culture, society, ethics? Does anyone know?

Is it in politics, law, government, religion, accounting?

Is it in violence, war, hatred, cruelty, compassion?

Is it in medicine, libraries, services, good intentions?

Is it in the good ideas that we keep repeating over and over?

I wondered, what can I believe? Who can I trust?

Atoms, relativity, ether, waves, plasma, energy, emptiness, fluctuations?

Doctors, diseases, cures, viruses, toxins, new foods, statistics?

Evolution, creation, randomness, design, experiment, intervention?

Politicians, governments, authorities, owners, family, community, animals?

Space aliens, ancient civilizations, happenstance, official secrecy?

I realize now that mostly I was looking in the wrong direction. None of it was really true in the way I thought true ought to be, you know, really true all of the time.

Today the world is even more wonderful than it was when I was young. It's more complex, with much more variety in many more ways. I think the whole of it is just far more believable and interesting than the parts.

It inspires me, teaching me to expand until I learn what awaits at the limits. That is where I noticed real truth and what truth really meant: at the outer limits of the merely believable.

Beliefs can be either-or, or they can be a matter of degree. Most beliefs are in the form of statements about something, while intuition and insight are often beyond words.

List the things you completely believe or believe in.

List the things you strongly believe.

List the things you believe but cannot explain.

List the things you believe but cannot describe.

List the things you believe but cannot even name.

What does belief have to do with truth and context?

What does belief have to do with relativity?

21 - ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE

ABSOLUTE: “Absolute” refers to reality. Reality is exactly what it appears to be. At the deepest level of your being, you are what reality is. Absolutely so.

RELATIVE: “Relative” refers to the character of unreality, as in “it is all relative.” Relativity refers to existence and non-existence, and to the general character of all experiences. Signs, symbols, colors, statements, shapes, sensations, and other things that refer to or represent other things, are all relativistic. All unreal things and indirect experiences exist or do not exist only in relation to other things, which is what is meant when we say they are not what they appear to be.

In reality, all things exist and are experienced only in relation to context. Without context, nothing can be known or experienced. This, also, is what is meant by relativity.

You read or hear these words that claim to discuss reality and unreality, but these words are unreal temporary things, ambiguous by nature, appearing in a limited and private context only in relation to other things. Words come and go. You may well doubt that you know

what they are supposed to mean. This is the reality of unreality.

*Experience is not what it appears to be,
yet neither is it anything else.*

Paraphrased: all experiences are relativistic and falsely representational, and when examined closely they appear to be relativistic and falsely representational because relativity is the reality of all experiences.

There appear to be two kinds of experience: direct and indirect. This is misleading. Direct experience is better understood simply as awareness, or as direct awareness when emphasizing the directness of awareness. We are aware of experiences and experiencing. Therefore, we are aware of relativity because experience is the same as relativity. This universe of all that can ever be experienced is only relativity, and relativity is exactly the same as this universe. Awareness is self-aware of reality including the reality of unreality.

Reality is absolute, and it has the innate character of certainty and unchanging meaning.

Relativity arises within reality, being, and awareness, and relativity itself is certain and unchanging. 'Relativity' means every existence and every experience is uncertain and constantly changing.

The reality of unreality is exactly the same as relativity; unreality is characterized by its uncertain and constantly changing appearance.

It is like looking into a clear magic jewel of infinitely many facets. The universe is this jewel. Every facet of this jewel is a different experience, a different idea, a different world-view, or a different individual life. Each experience, no matter how simple or complex, is a single facet of this jewel. This jewel is entirely composed of only these facets, each of which exists only relatively in relation to all other facets endlessly reflected in each other

all throughout this clear jewel. Each facet is a different way of experiencing, in part, the entirety of all these reflections.

Awareness experiences all facets of this universe; being knows this universe through relativity and representation.

Reality allows and illuminates everything within itself, just as you allow and illuminate everything within you.

Indirect experience is awareness only of appearances, which are always representational and relativistic. Indirect experience appears to have uncertain and ever-changing meaning because the universe appears to be relatively uncertain and ever-changing, even if change appears at times to be very slight or very slow.

Representation means that nothing is what it appears to be. Relativity means every appearance is illusion appearing only in relation to other illusory appearances through representations of representations of representations.

Relativity is where things are not what they seem to be. Relativity appears as the universe of whatever is possible to experience in any way.

Intuition is self-awareness of reality, and reality contains this universe of every possible experience. Reality is aware of the appearance of unreality as false representation and relativity. If you are the reality of all that you experience, then you contain within you the entire universe of everything that can ever be experienced.

The phrase, "absolute relativity," refers to the reality of unreality. You intuitively know the meaning of this. You know the value of participating and experiencing because you are the reality of all this.

Intuition of Reality

The Heart of Perfect Wisdom is a very short 200-word distillation of the 100,000-line *Large Discourse on Perfect Wisdom*, which was written in China around 1400 years ago. This partial translation reflects the words, ideas, and stories discussed above.

Appearance is nothing more than relativity, and relativity is nothing more than appearance.

Appearance itself is relativity, and relativity itself is appearance.

Sense, idea, habit, and experience—these, too, are only appearance, only relativity.

Everything is relative.

Nothing is created or destroyed.

Nothing is corrupt or pure.

Nothing is gained or lost.

So, appearance has no reality of its own:

no feeling, perceiving, habit, or experiencing;

no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind;

no sight, sound, aroma, flavor, sensation, or thought;

no external world to know and no inner world of knowing;

no ignorance and no ending of ignorance;

no old age and death, and no ending of old age and death;

no suffering, no cause of suffering, no ending of suffering, and no path to the ending of suffering;

no knowledge and no attainment, because there is nothing at all to attain.

All who are aware of this are freed from illusion and fear, and they are aware of this reality.

All who are awake to reality, regardless of when or how they awakened, know they are this reality.

The Heart of Perfect Wisdom is presented as a guided meditation. It describes a certain state of mind. People who practice this meditation do so with the expectation that practice will lead to this state of mind. It requires effort and commitment to achieve this or even briefly experience it in any meaningful way. Some topics in this book describe a state of mind similar to that in *The Heart*. *The Heart* primarily addresses the idea of absolute relativity.

Where Is Here is offered as an object of meditation. It consists of a simple word-puzzle with the clear implication that there is more to this puzzle than meets the eye. The context in which the puzzle is introduced implies another puzzle: “What is reality?” This book is a guide to solving both of these puzzles as one. Solving these puzzles can lead to greater understanding of the nature of reality. Other topics in this book describe a state of mind similar to that implied by “Where is here?” or “What is reality?” These two puzzles primarily reflect the nature of reality, being, and awareness.

What does intuition mean?

Where does intuition happen?

What does where mean?

What is the context of awareness?

What is the context of being?

What is the context of reality?

What is the context of here?

22 - DISCUSSION

Those who take upon themselves certain meditative puzzles, such as “Where is here?” “What is reality?” or *The Heart of Perfect Wisdom* typically do so because they seek answers to troubling questions, such as “What is this world?” “From where did it come?” or “Why is it so painful and difficult?” For the most part, those who today take up puzzles of this sort expect that the answer will not come from the world outside them but will instead come from within themselves. They believe that if they take up the right problem, and if they work diligently to understand and resolve that problem, then in time the answer will simply become quite clear to them one way or another.

At some point along the way, perhaps at a time when effort and hope are both exhausted, the world of ordinary things dissolves before your gaze. If your attention does not waver in this moment, then what remains within awareness is for a few seconds a perfectly calm and clear intuition of reality, something completely beyond name and form, something so simple and obvious that it can never be mistaken for an illusion or a passing fantasy.

This is not a matter of calculating or reasoning out a pointed answer to a pointed question. It is about giving the puzzle all the attention and energy that it needs. Then, when the stage is fully set, it is about letting go of unreality all at once so that nothing in particular remains.

*Solving these puzzles always means
letting go of unreality in order to see
precisely what remains.*

In the moment you let go, the puzzle makes perfect sense and the answer is perfectly obvious; illusion dissolves, but reality remains exactly as it has always been and will always be.

Reality never changes. Being, which is the same as reality, never changes. Awareness, that you faithfully devoted to the puzzle, never changes in spite of all the distracting, ever-changing experiences within your awareness. In this moment nothing at all distracts you from reality.

If on this quiet occasion you understand this, then you truly know what reality is, which is no different from being and no different from your awareness even right now as you are reading these words. This is what is meant by intuition of reality: perfect self-knowledge of being; perfect self-awareness of reality.

Where Is Here [What is reality?] is only a word-puzzle, but the solution can be deeply satisfying. Even just thinking about this puzzle can bring a measure of peacefulness to a sea of restless confusion and unhappiness.

Six other story-puzzles also illustrate or refer to intuition of reality and being:

Being Dreams Forgetting [What are ideas?]

Seeing a Tree [What is perception?]

The Seer and the Seen [What is illusion?]

The Five Paths [What is artifice?]

Ocean of Light [What is death?]

Memory of Being Born [What is memory?]

Eleven story-puzzles offer guidance on the art of solving difficult problems:

Ancient Chinese Puzzle [You already know the answer.]

The Flowering of a Wonderful Law [No one can do this for you.]

We Always Do the Best We Can [Do not worry about past or future.]

The Magician's Trick [Know the universe for what it is.]

Questions Children Ask [Do your own thinking.]

Ontological Monadology [Be flexible and question your answers.]

The Robin [Do not be distracted by mere words.]

Self-Sacrifice [Look behind the curtain.]

The Rain [Allow the universe to unfold as it will.]

The Mystery of the Ordinary [Examine every belief.]

Intuition of Reality [Set judgement aside.]

The word-topics are useful and meaningful tools, more for defining the puzzle than for solving it. Look to where the words are pointing and not to the words themselves. The definitions, suggestions, questions, arguments, and ideas are the fabric of the puzzle. But really, you cannot find a satisfying answer without intuition, and intuition is beyond words.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

“I grew up in America’s Green Country, but now I live near the Western shore.

At first, I was terrible at school. My teachers had a low opinion of me, and I had a low opinion of them. They thought I was illiterate and disruptive; I thought they were dishonest and ill-informed. But when I learned new ways to reason, things got easier.

I started college in science and math, but after a while I switched to philosophy and logic. I attended three different graduate schools: a year in history of technology, another year in business administration, then a master’s in philosophy and religion. I was fascinated with unusual ideas I found in all of those subjects.

I had always been interested in creative arts, even briefly attending art school, but events in my life drove me toward writing as the best way to create things. So, I studied philosophy and religion to learn how to write about some ideas that I found there.

I worked as a consultant on methods and standards for information projects, focusing on how people with widely different backgrounds and responsibilities can work together to create new things.”

— B.E.